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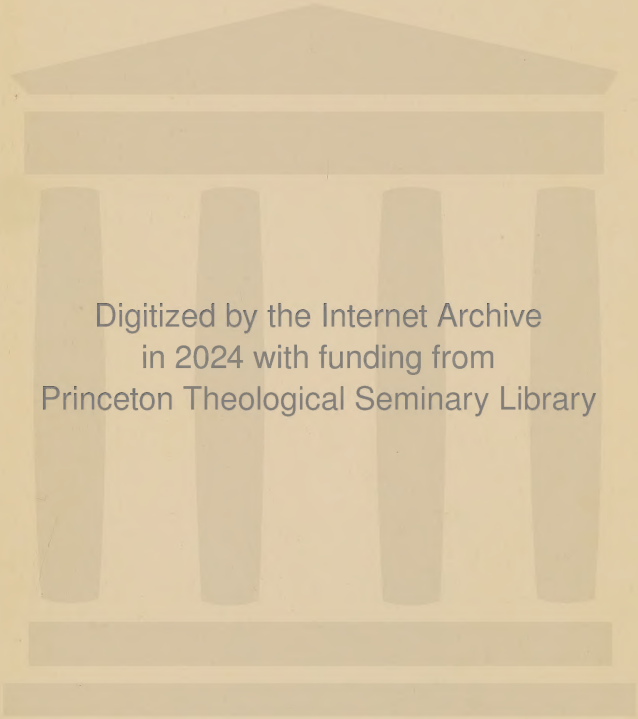
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ANGÉLIQUE ARNAULD, ABBESS OF PORT-ROYAL.

(From an engraving in the British Museum.)

[*Frontispiece.*

FEB 2 1929

ANGÉLIQUE OF PORT ROYAL

1591 1661

BY

E. K. SANDERS

"TU SOLUS SUFFICIS AMANTI"
de Imitatione Christi, lib. iii. cap. 23.

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INTRODUCTION

THE name of Angélique Arnauld, once so famous, suggests the thought of a great Reformer, even as the most general idea of the period in which she lived suggests the need of reform. But there is a manifest danger, in concentrating attention on one impressive life-work, of forgetting that each honest endeavour, however limited its aims may seem, is part of a great whole, wherein the failures often hold a place as important as the successes. Such endeavours, abortive and triumphant, were manifold in that half-century which witnessed the birth and early growth of the future Abbess of Port-Royal. According to the somewhat arbitrary division of history, the close of the Renaissance falls within forty years of her birth, and the self-assertion of Louis XIV. had been accepted by civilized nations ere she died, therefore she lived in an atmosphere of change, most of it in the direction of improvement, and that which she herself accomplished can take its fitting place only as one expression of a tendency widely diffused, not as an isolated phenomenon.

With the Renaissance, Europe awoke to possibilities of knowledge and of enjoyment hitherto shrouded, but the free use of the higher senses induced a longing for the freedom of the reason. It savours, perhaps, of the miraculous that the license of the later Renaissance did not turn more generally to the seductive doctrine of the Epicurean School, and it is true to say that when its paganism was directed into Christian channels, it was a proof of the regenerating power that dwells for ever in the Church.* The Christian channels did not, however,

* "Renaissance and Reformation," by J. M. Stone, p. 441.

invariably coincide with those that the Church approves. The period of the Reformation treads close upon the heels of the Renaissance, and the most prominent figures of the period of Reformation are types of the children of an unsettled hour. In William the Silent, in Henry of Navarre, in Elizabeth of England, we see the first results of the breaking of the old chains, the old position of natural acceptance had given place to the consideration of political expediency,* and though the ultimate issue might mean a gain in reality, the immediate effect was the loss of even an appearance of stability.

It is hard to measure loss and gain in such upheavals. Re-action is hardly separable from exaggeration, and wholesale reformers are apt to destroy treasures which they cannot re-create at will; but, if for no other reason, inasmuch as they form an opposition, they rank as benefactors to the community. The rebels may or may not be mistaken, but their rebellion is sure to act as a stimulus to self-criticism on the main body. The same disorders that drove Calvin and Luther and Huss into heresy re-acted through them on their loyal contemporaries, and a new generation of saints in Spain and France and Italy proclaimed that the shadows that obscured the Church's light might be thrust back by faith and holy living. Historians are not chary of recording the darkness of those shadows, but the efforts to disperse them were very various, and have been accorded widely differing interpretations. In the life-story of Angélique Arnauld we come closely into touch with one such effort, and one on which the opinion of the thinking world is still as much divided as it was two centuries ago; but it is futile to attempt to estimate its effects and accord it a fair measure of praise or blame without realizing the other endeavours, contemporary and prior, that sprang from the same hunger and thirst for righteousness by which the Port-Royalists were animated.

Perhaps the most celebrated instance of revolt against the Church within the Church is given by Savonarola, but that tragedy has a unique completeness in itself, and was—perhaps by

* J. Morley, "Romanes Lecture," 1897.

reason of its strangely sensational elements—not lasting in definite results. The people of Italy were as children; they could be moved by any one who played upon their feelings; while they listened to the voice of a strong man they were his slaves, and the more violent his claim the greater the excitement in responding to it. But widespread and deeply rooted wickedness among an emotional people is not cured by the influence of one strong personality. The persevering gentleness of Philip Neri,* although he did not win a tithe of the celebrity of his fellow-citizen, had more actual efficacy in the war that both were waging against a common enemy, for he went to the root of a growing evil patiently and wisely, in the spirit of humility, yet without disguising from himself that it was the shepherds who were in great measure responsible that their flocks had gone so far astray, and that reform must begin with those who held the sacred trust of guiding others. The gradual growth of the congregation of the Oratory bore fruit that was more permanent because that growth had been unsensational; and recognition of the real worth of Religion as the motive power of social life resulted from mere general observation of the practices and surroundings of Philip Neri. The child-like temper that was not strong enough to bear the strain of loyalty to Savonarola was magnetized by the large-hearted simplicity of S. Philip, and his rule over the Roman people was founded on that same law of love with which François de Sales guided and controlled his followers in France.

The methods of gentleness and of severity have each their advocates, and those times of difficulty gave scope for both. Where definite reform of existing evils was demanded the gentleness of Philip Neri would be out of place, yet the Italian nature seemed ill-adapted for a harsher ordinance. In France a great example would impress itself on the popular imagination, and be reflected in differing phases of life, but reform in Rome or Milan needed patient guidance; suggestion was almost

* The familiar name of "Pippo Buono" still commemorates the love that he inspired.

fruitless, and guidance of that light-minded race was an intricate task.

There was one need, however, common to all Christian countries in those days, and to the most saintly it proved specially an incentive to self-devotion. Since the fifth century the religious orders* had become more and more important as a factor in national life, and the gradual evaporation of their original spirit was an ominous suggestion of the lowering of every standard. The first great work of Angélique Arnauld was the reforming of her convent of Port-Royal, and as forerunners in the same endeavour she can claim the most renowned names of the preceding century. Italy even more than France had been the scene of that form of religious revival. The growth of the Barnabite friars† (the special charges of S. Carlo Borromeo) facilitated the spread of individual influence among the people, for the Barnabites were a preaching and scholastic order, and moved from place to place for the fulfilment of all reasonable demands. Contemporary with them were the Theatines,‡ who made adherence to the vow of poverty as searching as did S. Francis of Assisi, refusing in their early days to possess anything even as a community. Both orders bore their testimony to the re-birth of spiritual aspirations that had long lain dormant, but their celebrity was completely overshadowed by the foundation of that great society which struck its first roots in Rome, and, from the Eternal city, has spread its influence, in one form or another, throughout the world. And the power of the Jesuits bears special relation to the life of Angélique Arnauld. The "Company of Jesus" waged war upon Port-Royal and caused its downfall, yet the basis of the Rule of Port-Royal was identical with that of the Institute of Ignatius Loyola, being none other than that absolute self-renunciation

* The existence of religious orders in the third century can be proved, but S. Benedict, whose influence is specially marked in France and Italy, was born about A.D. 480, and died March, 543.

† These were the Congregation attached to the Church of S. Barnabas at Milan, and were formally sanctioned by the Pope in 1530.

‡ Sanctioned by the Pope, 1524. They were founded by S. Gasta de Thienne and the Bishop of Theate, afterwards Pope Paul IV.

which necessitates the suppression of every sensual instinct and surrender of personal ambition.

Fifty years before the birth of Angélique Arnauld, Ignatius Loyola was called from the delights of courtly life and the possibilities of military achievement to go forth into the world as a beggar, "rejected and despised among men." He accepted the call as a call from the voice of God, and suffered with the endurance that he had learnt in the lists and on the battle-field, emerging from the excesses of fanaticism, and the extravagances of a new-born faith, so schooled and purified that his hold upon his fellow-men became the greatest personal force of the century. Martin Luther had a new lesson with which to electrify his hearers, and therefore his voice resounded from end to end of Christendom; but Loyola had no new message, the truths he taught were stale with repetition, the fables were so familiar that they no longer challenged question. His power was personal, and his faith in the creed that he professed was interwoven with every fibre of his being. He was a Spanish soldier, trained in the spirit of obedience from his cradle; a Spanish grandee, and in that character armed with inveterate and invulnerable self-confidence; and finally, he had been as ignorant and unreflecting as were the majority of the noble warriors of the period. It would seem that this was the key to his immeasurable influence. He appealed to his generation—not from a plane above them, but from the level of their own thought and experience; they saw in him a man fashioned as they were, not cultivated to inimitable perfections of refinement by a life-time of study and tuition; and though they might rebel against him, his influence forced itself upon them. One after another yielded to his claim for the surrender of their wills to the indomitable mastery of his own, and thus party spirit in its purest form became the foundation of the power of the Jesuits. It was the party spirit which involves absolute devotion to a leader, absolute concentration on a common object; no force is so rare but no force is so great, and it is a proof of the genius of Loyola that all his provision for the future guidance of the society when his personal direction should be

removed, tends to consolidate the component parts as inseparable from the great whole, and to foster the spirit of sacrifice, latent in many natures, until the surrender of individual advantage for the benefit of the party should become a matter of personal ambition.

"We must make ourselves indifferent to all created things when a choice is left us; so that we should not desire health more than sickness; riches more than poverty; honour more than contempt; a long life more than a short one; and so of all the rest; desiring and choosing only what will conduce most surely to the end for which we were made." These words occur in the Spiritual Exercises of Loyola, and they breathe the very spirit of Thomas à Kempis, yet they have been made the theme for attack upon the followers of their author, and injunctions that point only to self-denial "in things lawful" can be strained into a suggestion of the most popular accusation against the Jesuits.* The fact is significant of the relations of the Jesuits and their opponents. In other disputed questions the witness of experience, and the testimony of public opinion, may help to find a verdict; but here these tests are useless, because on either side the power of prejudice has destroyed justice and moderation, and a dispassionate judge—should such a one exist—is confronted with evidence, confirmed by many tongues, and by as many denied with equal emphasis.

In truth, the detractors of the Jesuits have served them by their unstinted calumny. The hatred that they cherish is too deadly to be satisfied with a method of attack involving patience and discretion; the men who have fallen victims to that fever have desired to see the objects of their abhorrence broken and humbled in the sight of the world, personal rancour has animated them, and they have rushed blindly to the attack. And the event has taught them again and again that they have not to deal with individual Jesuits, but with the company, and the company, in its impersonal majesty, receives attack without any visible shrinking, rather with the imperturbable smile of the Sphinx

* "Finis determinat probitatem actus."

herself. "The name which the society is privileged to bear has ever been a mark for contradiction and persecution, for the fiercest hatred and the most slanderous calumnies of the world"—it is thus that the Jesuits meet the insinuations of their enemies; and Loyola—who made a claim to the power of second-sight—may have foreseen the matchless quality of the weapon with which he armed his children when, in face of all opposition, he chose for them the most sacred name, and claimed for them in so doing the blessing promised to those whom men revile. Yet had it been true that he could pierce the veil that shrouds futurity, and so had known his Master's name was to be made the root of terms synonymous with craft and treachery in the minds of millions of honest men; if he could have foreseen the eminence to which so many of his children have attained, and the immensity of power over the pomps and attractions of this world which they have wielded, it is not to be doubted that he would have withheld the name of Jesus from association with a system abhorred—justly or wrongfully—by a vast multitude of Christian people.

But Loyola—though ambition had survived the frailties he had succeeded in repressing—was essentially and primarily unworldly. His Spiritual Exercises contain that celebrated act of self-surrender which—if the record of his life be trustworthy—might have been constantly upon his lips, "Take unto Thyself, my Lord, my whole liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will. All that I am and have is Thine, for Thou hast given it me. I give back all to Thee to be disposed of according to Thy sovereign pleasure. Grant me but Thy love and Thy grace, and I am rich enough and ask no more."

Those words express the ideal of self-surrender that animated the Abbess Angélique and her sisters of Port-Royal, for, though the Jesuits and the Port Royalists were divided by as violent an animosity as ever sprang from an intellectual disagreement, it is impossible to deny the affinity of temperament and in some degree also of experience between Ignatius Loyola and Angélique Arnauld. The same unsought yet overmastering conviction, the same unflinching courage in acting on it, the same avidity of

practical self-sacrifice guided and animated both. Yet they seem to be the more divided by these points of similarity, and, as we contemplate them, realizing the fierce contentions of their followers no less than the antagonism of each towards the standards and opinions of to-day, the tremendous force of their claim on an admiration which no disagreement on doctrine should have the power to blemish, calls to our lips the plea of S. Augustine: "Let those be fierce against you who know not with what toil the truth is discovered—with what difficulty the eye of the inner man is made sound—what sighs and groans it costs even in ever so small a degree to understand God." *

Yet humanly the association of the two, even in thought, is an anomaly, for it was the deliberate intention of Loyola to uphold that which it was the lot of Angélique to question, namely, the supreme authority of the Roman Church. She, toiling painfully in search of truth, came all unwittingly too near denial of the claim made by the Church of Rome to establish a monopoly on the means of salvation. It has been urged against her and her followers that "they attempted to believe in the infallibility of an abstract Church of the past or the future, while they rebelled against the ever-living Church of God." † Their rebellion was, in fact, against the arrogance of man, but their attempt at belief is not mis-stated, and it is one maintained by faithful hearts in each succeeding generation.‡ Controversy is not, however, the leading note in the life-history of Angélique Arnauld. The persecution that resulted from it intimately affected her outward circumstances, and the party spirit that it fostered gave a unity to the Port-Royalists that enormously increased their force, but controversy was never either the motive or the object of Angélique herself. Her capacity for thought awoke in her early youth, and she found

* Epist. Man. 2. Quoted by Dr. Bright, "Lives of Three Great Fathers."

† Father Dalgairns, "The Spirit of Jansenism" (Introduction to "The Heart of Jesus").

‡ "Such a unity as our Lord prayed for (S. John xvii. 20, 21) is set before us in the history of the primitive Church, and such will be the visible unity of the finally re-united Church."—Father Puller, S.S.J.E., "Primitive Saints," ch. vi.

herself responsible at least in name for a condition which, as her reason assured her, was an outrage on the laws of truth and righteousness. The degradation of the religious life had stirred many hearts to superhuman effort within that century of extremes. S. Teresa had been dead scarcely ten years * when Angélique first saw the light, and simultaneous with her reforms in Spain had been the labours of S. Carlo Borromeo to reproduce the spirit of self-consecration among the Italian monasteries.†

The same enthusiasm of a new awakening bore fruit in France. Many great names are witness to it. François de Sales and Pierre de Bérulle belong to the generation before the Arnaulds; the work of Vincent de Paul and of M. Olier is contemporary with that of Angélique; while that of de Rancé, the great fanatic of asceticism, succeeded hers.

It was the part of François de Sales to stir a multitude, who were slumbering away their lives in self-complacent apathy, to a sort of holy emulation, he touched them even more by example than by eloquence; while Pierre de Bérulle, appealing more to the intellect and less to the heart, proclaimed the essential truths which the world was disregarding with a lucidity and force that compelled attention. And, as a visible and permanent result of each, there remained the communities that each established for prayer and the service of God. The order of the Visitation was founded by Jeanne de Chantal, but it owes as much to François de Sales as to its foundress, and the establishment of the Carmelites in France was due to the labour and perseverance of Pierre de Bérulle. And of a greater permanence than either, because more truly indigenous, we find S. Vincent's Sisters of the Poor, as strong a power for good in the godless France of the twentieth century, as in the days when "his most Catholic Majesty" Louis XIV. sat on the throne.

In aim the Carmelites had most in common with Port-Royal, and it is conceivable that the disorders of the period claimed the devotion that manifests itself in extreme and violent practice.

* S. Teresa died 1582.

† C. Sylvain, "Hist. de S. Carlo Borromeo," vol. i. ch. xvii.

Monasticism, it is true, was still here and there preserved in its true conditions, and defended a few outposts of Christian life even in the sixteenth century. In Paris, in the reeking disorder of the Valois rule, a few monks of the Chartreux maintained the practice of the dedicated life in the Monastery of the Faubourg S. Jacques; but a cloistered order cannot stem the tide of social madness, the monks of the Chartreux were not visibly an influence, they were only able to stimulate and sustain such aspirations after holiness as had not been submerged in the whirlpool that seethed outside their walls. In the generation before that in which de Sales and Pierre de Bérulle made their attack on the prevailing evil, the few examples extant of piety and self-restraint were to be found within the cloister, for the hands that wielded the power of the Church in public places were soiled by many a foul deed, and priests whose private record would have fitted them to be the boon companions of Henri IV., did not shrink from exercising the privileges conferred by Christ on His disciples. There is ample testimony to the condition of affairs in contemporary letters and memoires and romances, and it is this condition which made many forms of religious revival a necessity as a defence of the Church's honour.

It was the self-chosen task of de Bérulle (as it had been of S. Philip Neri) to stimulate the secular clergy into adoption of a way of life more consistent with their status as the Church's representatives. In this he was the forerunner of the Abbé de Saint-Cyran. While he was still only a simple priest, de Bérulle was appalled by what he saw of the misuse of the sacerdotal functions. His experience in this direction was more violent, though perhaps less subtle than that which was thrust upon the Director of Port-Royal twenty years later. And in all probability the ideals of the two differed but little, though the methods of Saint-Cyran were the most violent, and those of de Bérulle the most successful. It was the key-note of Saint-Cyran's teaching to his fellow-men that the obligation to holiness of life involved by the tenure of the priestly office was so great as to claim a tribute of fear and trembling; but though Saint-Cyran's insistence

on this point aroused the ire of his contemporaries, he had not in effect maintained it with more vigour than had Pierre de Bérulle. The wide experience of the Cardinal assured him that infinite harm was wrought by easy and light-minded acceptance of the office of spiritual direction. That charge he said could not be rightly undertaken unless it were inspired: "by the soul rather than the brain; by prayer instead of study; by experience instead of much discourse; and by love rather than by criticism—by the love of Jesus who was Himself delivered up and abandoned, self-immolated and poured out for the salvation of souls." *

The definition might have been written by Saint-Cyran, and it was by Port-Royal rather than by the Oratorians that it was proclaimed and attested before the world. And the analogy betwixt the two great teachers does not cease with their view of the sacred ministry. To each was given the task of directing a religious community when it was in a stage of peculiar fervour and under exceptional circumstances. The struggles of the League had not lessened the number of the monasteries in Paris or the provinces, but the prevailing atmosphere of misrule did undoubtedly infect the air of the cloister. There existed numerous establishments where women who were not able or not willing to marry might seek refuge, but the true spirit of the religious life was almost a thing of the past, so that the chosen souls who, in that moment of revival, desired to consecrate themselves to a special service, were debarred from fulfilling their vocation in monasteries that were easy of access. Even where the rule was respected and the general life was innocent, it was impossible, when the century that had known S. Teresa was hardly over, to satisfy an ardour, stirred by contemplation of her ideals, under the easy-going régime which had sufficed even the pious women of an earlier generation.

Thus side by side we see the extremes of sin and holiness, and learn that exaggerated asceticism is a natural form of reaction from excessive license. The seeds of religious instinct sown by the hand of God in the hearts of a few sprang up quickly, and

* "Direction des Superieurs," ch. x.

forced them to look from Marie de Medicis to S. Teresa. The clamour of the Louvre sickened them, and their thoughts flew with a great longing to the silence of Carmel. Urged and encouraged by Mme. Acarie * (who may be regarded as a pure example of the high-born dévote), de Bérulle, with infinite difficulty, brought a few of the Spanish daughters of S. Teresa into French territory, and established them in the Faubourg S. Jacques. In the first novitiate of the French Carmelites were daughters of the noblest houses in France; the enthusiasm with which the movement was supported bore testimony to the vitality of the religious instinct. The rule of the Carmelites is severe, and it was rigidly enforced; fasts, prolonged watchings, and every species of bodily discomfort and deprivation was the lot of those who received the habit; every influence of heredity and of environment must have been against them, yet their dominant desire was to renounce any indulgence of the lower nature. It is impossible to withhold from them a tribute of wonder and of admiration, but in its train there comes an inevitable movement of regret. For the zeal of those generous hearts would have gained in depth and reality if it had been restrained within due limits. The perpetual outward protestation, the self-abasement which is represented by an attitude of the body, the self-renunciation that demands self-imposed physical suffering, these take too prominent a place in the records of these pioneers of religious revival.

The dedicated life has its own dangers: the extravagant penance that generates self-complacency is perhaps the most obvious to the onlooker, and the devotees of Carmel were specially exposed to it because of the atmosphere of novelty that stimulates sensationalism. As a result the interior life suffered from an excess of impulsive ardour that is more suggestive of the frenzied rhapsodies of the fanatic than of the calm of the consecrated soul. Thus again and again the tragedy of human endeavour repeats itself in history; the human element, in an enterprise that at the outset seemed dominated completely by

* Afterwards la Sœur Marie de l'Incarnation.

the spiritual, spreads gradually, until it threatens to canker and corrupt the whole.

The appeal of S. Teresa, transmitted in all its original rigorousness by de Bérulle and Mme. Acarie to those softly nurtured girls of France, was met with the eager enthusiasm which it is inspiring to remember. The kingdom of heaven seemed to open before the astonished eyes of the new Carmelites, and the thought of sacrifices made was obliterated by a very passion of thankfulness. But regret insistently disturbs our admiration; there was too much excitement even at the beginning when aspiration was at its purest. The appeal to the senses (which justifies itself only in the preliminary opening of dimmed eyes to the possibility of spiritual joy) became an end instead of a means. The love of luxury, denied ordinary indulgence, found expression in elaborate ritual, and in the magnificent decoration of places of worship. Angélique Arnauld wrote to the Queen of Poland in 1655* that the Carmelites had a sanctuary which had cost 120,000 livres; and the convent buildings were adorned with corresponding lavishness. The outlay in both cases was no doubt intended in all good faith "ad majorem Dei gloriam," yet the analogy betwixt the love of magnificence in any form and the lesson of the Cross is far to seek, and gorgeous accessories are apt to distract and alienate those who would worship in spirit and in truth, even if they can justly claim to stir a semblance of religious sentiment among the servants of Mammon. Moreover, if we look below the surface, this weakness for external grandeur was not an isolated signal of the rapid decadence of the Carmelites. The level to which they attained at the outset when they were stimulated by the fervour of Mme. Acarie, and directed by the temperate wisdom of de Bérulle, was, it would seem, too high to be maintained amid the ebb and flow of influences, inborn and external, making against righteousness.

"Moins on parle de nous au monde, moins on nous connoît, plus Dieu et les Anges nous connoissent et nous aiment," wrote Angélique Arnauld.† True comprehension of that saying implies

* "Lettres de la Mère Angélique," vol. ii. No. 703. † Ibid. vol. i., No. 109.

comprehension of one aspect, at least, of the religious life, and it is in that very aspect that it most easily becomes perverted. Angélique herself, deep as was her understanding of it, was forced to live her life in the glare of general observation. Such is the necessary lot of all who are called upon to lead, but the Mother-Abbess was never without a wistful consciousness that it was from the hidden lives, passed within the walls of Port-Royal and shielded from general scrutiny, that the community drew its extraordinary vitality and the strength that kept it stable against the hurricane of threats and arguments and opposition. But the Carmelites were called to a different experience. Their inauguration in the Faubourg S. Jacques had caused what may be termed a flutter of emotion (more or less of a religious nature) in the society of Court and city. The reality of spiritual exaltation that held the first generation of novices went far to preserve them from the taint of self-regard, but it became less and less possible for their successors to be oblivious of the halo of picturesqueness that in the popular imagination glorifies the daughters of S. Teresa.

It cannot be forgotten, as we read their history, that they were Frenchwomen, and that their rule had been designed for women of another race, who differed strangely from them in natural temperament. The Carmelites of France made a claim on admiration because they held their ground in face of adverse influence, but they were not a natural product, and in an artificial age they did not escape the blemish of an artificial appeal to the emotional element that too often obscures the real spirit of religion. It is picturesqueness rather than piety that appeals to the popular imagination in the story of Louise de la Vallière, or even in that of Mlle. du Vigean.*

"The things and persons to which a man really gives his attention will engross him," said de Rancé,† "and the more place he gives to the world in his thoughts and actions the less he

* Marthe de Fors du Vigean. She was supposed to be the only woman beloved by "le grand Condé," but marriage between them was impossible. She joined the Carmelites in 1647, and died 1665.

† "Lettres," de Rancé, No. 223.

has for God." Only the student of the religious life, perhaps, can realize the searching truth of an aphorism apparently so simple. It produces the maxim of la Mère Angélique a little further, and the objective and subjective interchange. The Carmelites were drifting, they needed to cast anchor and to take their bearings, but no one was at hand to tell them of their need. Conscious of the reality of their vocation, they forgot that they were still susceptible to the blandishment of the world in its most insidious form. To hurl defiance at contempt and ignominy, as the Port-Royalists were called to do, is an easier part than to maintain indifference towards the admiration of mankind. A laudable desire to edify had dictated those practices at which we have been glancing. But the justification of the rule of the contemplative order lies in the suppression of all desire save that of the mystic. The ideal of S. Teresa cannot even reflect itself on a tabulated system, and it proved to be harder to reach than it had appeared in the dreams of Mme. Acarie and de Bérulle. But the purity of the ideal cannot be smirched by the shortcomings of the idealists; and in the ideal of the mystic the incentive is self-contained, the failure of one only enhances the glory of the goal in the eyes of another.

In the splendour of their aspiration and the possible weakness of their accomplishment, the history of the French Carmelites is typical of the history of Monasticism; and melancholy as that result may be, it cannot depreciate either the grandeur or the importance of the original standard. For the theory of Monasticism is absolutely distinct from its history, and it is the theory and not the records of its interpretation that will guide us to understanding of the original spirit of Port-Royal. Moreover, though there may be ground for some adverse testimony, it is impossible to deny that, in the seventeenth century, the revival of the Monastic Idea—of the Religious Life as it is commonly called—marked a definite essay towards the reconstruction of governing customs and traditions, to the end that the imitation of Christ might cease to be a mere phantasm; and that the essay was crowned with success of far-reaching effectiveness.

In earlier times it had become the part of the monastic orders to cherish and preserve the art and learning of each generation, shielding them as they shielded themselves from the conflict and danger of a lawless age; it was only here and there that the monasteries guarded the more precious treasure of the spiritual life. In many instances retirement and leisure bred indolence and vice, and where this was avoided, the most frequent result of seclusion was the development of a refined and cultivated taste which the atmosphere of Court and camp must inevitably have quenched. The world of art and letters owes an enormous debt to the race of cloistered students, but it cannot be maintained for a moment that they fulfilled the purpose of the saints who were founders of religious orders. Such fulfilment had no more place in the scheme of their desires than in that of their tippling degenerate brethren, and the real obligation of their vows sat on them just as lightly. But again false interpretation leaves the original ideal undisturbed. The great Trappist reformer * put the case clearly with the unflinching boldness that made him so strong a power in his generation. "Although the majority of monks preserve no vestige of their original saintliness," he wrote; "although they have completely fallen away from the intentions of their founders; although in their daily life there remains no sign nor remnant of that deep abnegation to which they are specially bound, and that their delight in human intercourse and interests is in equal measure with their obligation to detachment; nevertheless, if we go back to the root of things and judge, not by derelictions and abuses, but by the reality, it becomes evident that the monastic life is a condition of extreme mortification; that it means pure and continuous contemplation of God without distraction; and that the true monk, having renounced all cares and carnal affections, and hating himself before all else, follows Jesus Christ with a fervour that is continually renewed, and which causes him to exclaim continually in his heart, 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee.'"

* See "De la Sainteté de la Vie Monastique," ch. iv: De Rancé.

The habit—always prevalent in war-like periods—of regarding the cloister as a refuge for the incompetent and a haven for those who had come to shipwreck in the world, was a primary cause of its degradation. No misconception could be more fatal to comprehension of the reality which is the complete, and the only, justification of a monk. Thomas à Kempis is the most familiar exponent of that reality, but his standards are not, as a rule, accepted as being applicable to everyday life, and those who made the same profession and strove for the same goal are relegated with him to the category of the visionary. The same cause and effect repeat themselves in the intimate history of the Christian nations. The primary claim made by our Lord's life and teaching, and the method of response adopted by the saints, is irreconcilable with the habits and conventions of the world. Many minds, not wholly heedless, can content themselves with a compromise; and to some it is possible, by the grace of God, to live in the world, but not be of it, to touch and taste, and still remain unsullied. And to a few—as the Church has recognized from a very early period—there comes a special call to special consecration. The baptismal vow involved renunciation of the world, but, as soon as its administration became customary, it was interpreted with a laxity that it must always be difficult to explain. One consequence of its infringement was the desire for the threefold vow of the religious, the detailed comprehensiveness of which seemed to bar every door against the corruption of the world.

Undoubtedly it was the profound belief of the sincere religious (a belief confirmed and supported by the Church) that Christ summoned a few to serve Him specially in every generation, even as He summoned one here and there with an individual summons on the shores of Galilee. Those who responded then and afterwards were to be rewarded by a nearness of association with Him not given to all His flock, but in proportion to the privilege was the difficulty of the response. "That which God asks of a man whom He has withdrawn from the corruption of the world is something so pure and so exalted that the measure

of response can never be too great. The chief among misfortunes is to have entered on that holy profession, and to live an ordinary life not rising to its claims."

Once more we turn to de Rancé, for there has never, perhaps, been a more eager student of the theory of Monasticism than the Trappist monk. All that he learnt he lived with a sort of despairing fervour, clutching at every assurance that the call to him was real, yet giving in his own person an instance of the doubting vocation in its most painful aspect. The call to renunciation, to follow Christ in humility on a path that is steep and painful, is one to which souls have answered again and again since the first call was heard by human ears. But it is not often that the realization of the call finds its chief expression in an agonized sense that the answer is not adequate. The development is an imperfect one, but it is no hindrance to interior faithfulness, for we find it in such souls as de Rancé and Angélique Arnauld. Its imperfection, indeed, constitutes a defence against the perils that have overwhelmed some who rested too securely in the sense of their election. "There are two illusions," said de Rancé, "to which such as desire to love God are specially liable. The first is that of being assured of a love for Him without giving any proof of it by obedience to His teaching. The second is the multiplication of scrupulous observances which obscure true communion." * Between the two lay the right path, and he had most chance of finding it who was most conscious of the pitfalls that lay on either hand.

We shall find at Port-Royal the suggestion of both those illusions of which de Rancé treats. For a time the community was a prey to that visionary and emotional religion which is particularly a snare to women, and wherein the true conception of Christian doctrine is liable to be lost amid the hallucinations of an indulged imagination. But for them there lay a more abiding danger in the rule that loses inspiration in detail, and fosters vain self-confidence by assigning vast importance to observances that are worthless if the spirit that prompts them has escaped. Only

* De Rancé, "Maximes," No. 313.

by close and intimate study can we with any measure of justice satisfy ourselves of the reality of the Port-Royalists or of their error. And in such study we may continue to look to de Rancé for assistance, for although he was not a pioneer of reform, he was a peculiarly vigorous and uncompromising reformer, and his writings contain a sound criterion of the life of the religious. The more we realize his conception of it the more understanding we shall gain of the scope of obligation on those who aspire towards the counsels of perfection.

"You must not be deceived," he wrote to another monk; "your vow requires self-abnegation, renunciation of pleasure, detachment from those things whose use in the world is innocent; love of retirement and silence and of meditation on the word of God; obedience according to your rule; that absolute humility to which we have such constant exhortation; and, finally, the independence and purity of heart that it implies in all who make it. These are the holy conditions to which you are bound, and the duty from which no one can dispense you. Outward austerities and observances may be modified, but there can be no modification of the inward obligation. That is a debt that can never vary. It exists as a whole. God remits no part of it, and man cannot interfere with it." *

De Rancé formed his standard in full view of the possibility of fulfilling every rule laid down by the most inspired of founders, and yet failing in the worship that is in spirit and in truth, and his insistence had more weight because of his past notoriety. A sensational repentance had made him a conspicuous figure, and his steadfast perseverance in the austere conditions he had chosen, turned his celebrity into a definite power for good in a generation that had been schooled against its will by Saint-Cyran and his followers to knowledge of the meaning of repentance. For the Trappist's message was no novelty; it had already been delivered to his generation, and had not fallen on deaf ears. His summons to repentance, to the search for the narrow way, to continuous aspiration towards

* "Lettres," de Rancé, No. 226.

the Unseen, was only a reiteration of the clarion-call that had come from Port-Royal.

Indeed, no true conception of the historical value of Port-Royal in relation to other expressions of social and ethical reaction can possibly be arrived at without some understanding of its original attitude towards the central and dominant influences in the Roman Catholic Church. To minds that are specially alive to the errors of Rome, Port-Royal seems to represent an oasis of Protestantism in a wilderness of bigotry and priestcraft, but such an impression is fatal to comprehension of the real spirit and intention of the Arnaulds and of the community of which that extraordinary family was the nucleus. Their work was crushed out of existence by the authority of the Church, it is true, but none the less, they have a part with her, and though sentence is passed upon them in her name, it was zeal for her honour that had led them to depart from the well-trodden paths that offered safety.

A recent writer * suggests that we may find in the Gospel of S. John a parable foreshadowing the relation of papal authority to the advance guard of religious thought. S. John outran S. Peter when both were in quest of the evidence of the Resurrection, yet S. Peter reached their destination in due time. The pages of ecclesiastical history continually re-suggest the analogy. The representative of the Church on earth again and again is left behind by the saint who has lived hourly with Christ, by the mystic whose testimony is not easy to understand. But the goal is ever the same for both. The survival of the Church as a visible reality when all other institutions crumble and give way before the pressure of outward change, is in itself a proof that the vital energy of her true sons and daughters is drawn from her, even when she appears to have disowned them. The misuse of her external power by human intervention blinds the eyes of mankind to her real unity, and, by a wonderful paradox, we find many a lonely soul enduring persecution inflicted in her name by means of the strength that she has imparted.

* Henri Joli, "Psychologie des Saints."

"The Church," said the Abbé de Saint-Cyran, "is the company of those who serve God in the light and profession of the true faith and in the union of charity."* And Jacqueline Pascal, who is as true an exponent of the spirit of Port-Royal as the great director, carries his thought a little further: "Because it is the Spirit of Christ that binds the members of His Church to Him and to each other," she says, "we cannot be deprived of the reality of our union, so long as we have charity (the Spirit of Christ), even though the outward symbols of union may be taken from us."† The generous simplicity of such a definition is more in accordance with our idea of the time when "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul," than of Rome under Innocent X., but—if, in fact, it transgressed the law of obedience—Port-Royal paid a full penalty, and in intention it was loyal to the Church. The inspiration of Port-Royal was not the desire of novelty, nor was the great endeavour that brought it to disaster a bid for independence. Its goal was definite, and was nothing less than the re-sanctifying of those ordinances which, by unworthy handling, had lost their full efficacy as means of grace to a blind and sinning generation. The incentive to such an attempt exists continually, and, if we decide that Port-Royal missed success, it does not lose by that decision in helpfulness to all who would venture on a like task in any other age. For the lessons of Port-Royal are not entangled with the issues of human decisions on success and failure. We know that the brightness of Divine revelation is always marred by the faultiness of our apprehension; nevertheless, though the perfect must continue to elude us, and the mistakes in every human experiment to loom much larger than the pure motive that inspired it, the strength and truth in a really great endeavour inevitably reveal themselves.

As we draw closer and closer to the life of Port-Royal we seem to see the number of its blemishes in equal ratio with its unfolding beauties. It is advisable, indeed, to approach it with a full conviction that we shall find there those elements of error and of

* M. Ricard, see "Premiers Jansenistes de Port-Royal," p. 139.

† Fuzet, "Jansenistes du 17me Siècle," p. 124.

frailty that are the portion of every human enterprise, and as has been said, we shall do well to free ourselves of pre-conceived opinions, and not to bring any ready-made idea of its relation to the traditions and limitations of average human experience. Only thus can we hope to learn its secrets, and if in the end—when we have regarded its self-repression, its insistent summons to repentance, its stern practice of an austerity that involved repudiation of innocent delights—we see it all only as a vast mistake and an outrage on the laws of common sense; even then, as our thoughts return with relief to the rational world with its everlasting quest of the convenient balance betwixt God and Mammon, we must perforce respond to the regretful comment of M. Vinet: "S'il faut que l'homme se trompe il vaut mieux qu'il se trompe ainsi." *

Moreover, it is not certain that the first verdict would be the final one. Port-Royal may appeal, and at a second hearing other aspects of the cause present themselves. One claim it makes necessitates reflection, for its standards are incompatible with existing standards of the normal. To be attuned to the teaching of Angélique Arnauld we must be ready to reconstruct such standards, paying due heed to the place that violent revulsions of feeling hold in the elements of her impressive atmosphere. For at Port-Royal the overwhelming force of new conviction, the sudden awakening, which there was briefly termed the gift of grace, seemed to sweep away the experience of ordinary conditions acquired in an unenlightened past. So that the point of view of the Court was as great a puzzle to the hermit as the call to the life of prayer and self-denial to the courtier.

The letter of their rule was a guide to the silent nuns up the steep ascent of Calvary, but the cross was the emblem of the greatest love as well as of the greatest suffering conceivable. "La verité, hors de la charité, n'est pas Dieu," says Pascal.* That was the most profound of the truths learnt at Port-Royal. The most untiring research, the severest self-criticism, the sharpest

* A. R. Vinet, "Etudes sur Pascal."
† "Pensées," ch. xvi.

self-repression was found in its eventual effect to have glorified and enlarged the capacity for love. An extraordinary diversity of types were drawn to one centre, and scope was found for the expression of widely varying proclivities. The original call was the call to repentance. It rang from Port-Royal in such wise that those who heard it sought respite from the general hubbub that the sound might reach them in its full distinctness. The story of the hermits of Port-Royal is a curious chapter in the history of human developments. They were the defenders of the theory, which Saint-Cyran had endeavoured to bring prominently before the world, that an easy method of self-judgment was a sort of spiritual suicide; at the same moment the Jesuits—to the end that the Church might widen her dominion—were lightening the conditions of allegiance. Some inkling of the violence with which the two opinions clashed may be gathered from the "Provincial Letters" of Blaise Pascal, which have immortalized the controversy of Jansenist and Jesuit without illuminating its true issues.

Careful consideration of the history of the time—a time when the lives of the people appeared godless, but when the idea of the Church was accepted as universally as that of the King—points to the conclusion that the casuistic treatises that roused the wrath of the Port-Royalists, were written with the same desire to strengthen the visible arm of the Church as had prompted the teaching of Saint-Cyran and the book of Antoine Arnauld.* And if both sides be admitted to have acted from good motives, no less must both be convicted of unscrupulous use of the weapons of polemic warfare. The Jansenist writings were mangled and misquoted, and a whole edifice of argument erected on a phrase without its context, but Blaise Pascal himself (or those who supplied him with material) was the worst offender,† because his inimitable style gave him a mastery over the minds of men which constitutes an obligation to accuracy. A question asked by a recent critic of the famous "Letters" should provide food for reflection to ardent

* Auguste Molinier, Introduction "Œuvres de Pascal," vol. i. p. 9.

† See especially "Lettres Provinciales," Nos. V. and VI.

partisans of Jansenism: "If, instead of a Jansenist attacking Jesuits, it were a Jesuit attacking Jansenists, and employing against them precisely the same weapons with which Pascal achieved his triumphs, is it not possible that the 'Provinciales' would have obtained even more than their actual notoriety, and be constantly held up as a convincing specimen of the means employed to gain their ends by disciples of Ignatius Loyola?" *

It can hardly be denied that there is ample justification for the question, and the admission indicates the extreme difficulty of arriving at a true verdict on bygone points of controversy. But the battle had only an exterior link to the life of Angélique Arnauld; her real development was independent of the triumphs and of the blunders of the combatants. It was only with the original cause of conflict that she concerned herself, and that—namely, the action of the remedy of penitence on the disease of sin—had been the theme of her profoundest thought, long ere Saint-Cyran or any other follower of Jansenius had approached her.

When it is charged against Port-Royal that it inculcated a spirit of fear and trembling, the charge must be admitted, for it was the essence of its strength that it summoned souls to face reality, to see themselves in relation to the standard Christ had given, and again and again the result was that fear and trembling that scandalized the world. But when self-revelation had done its work in disclosing the remedy for the newly realized ills, the shadow of fear and trembling was lifted. "La connaissance de notre misère sans celle de Jesus-Christ fait le désespoir," wrote Pascal, with the vividness of experience. "Il est le centre de tout et l'object de tout: et qui ne le connoit pas ne connoit rien dans l'ordre du monde ni dans soi-même." †

A tremendous concentration of attention upon sin as a necessary part of human nature demanding careful analysis for elimination, was characteristic of the thought of the time, but it implies a point of view sharply at variance with that adopted by some of

* Father Gerard, S.J., *The Month*, August, 1904.
† "Pensées," ch. xiv.

the reflective minds of a later age.* Yet to the Port-Royalists the ruthlessness of the intimate self-scrutiny they advocated was hidden by a larger thought. They held that self-knowledge led by necessity to the knowledge of Christ : "Qui ne le connoit pas ne connoit rein dans soi-même." But at the same time self-knowledge, as they understood it, was tantamount to penitence. The component parts of their theory are not separable, and, regarding it as a whole, it loses the suggestion of inhuman rigour that might appertain to the detail of its practice. For they believed that to call a sinner to the knowledge of his sin to be an act of love, but it was the love that a man may learn only in the presence of God—the love of God that springs from self-surrender, the love of his neighbour evoked by a stage of self-abhorrence.

It has been said by one whose thoughts dwell much upon Port-Royal that "the tenderness of the soul is in proportion to its strength, and its strength is in proportion to its destitution." † The saying gives the key to much that is repellent in the lives of those resolute ascetics ; for those who have eyes to see beneath the surface, their tenderness is in truth in proportion to their strength.

The Port-Royalists of the first generation are photographed on the page of history in a group that differs in every lineament from the crowding medley that surrounds them. They aspired after a high ideal of Christian perfection, and without doubt there is an element of strain in their aspirations, but when we glance from them to the standards of their contemporaries, their self-discipline, ferocious though it often was, no longer seems gratuitous. For we can but liken the social life of the sixteenth century to a morass of wickedness and degradation where no sure foothold

* See Maeterlinck : "Il n'est pas indispensable qu'on se corrige des fautes avouées ; car il y a des fautes nécessaires à notre existence et à notre caractère. Beaucoup de nos defauts sont les racines mêmes de nos qualités" ("De la Sincerité : Le Double Jardin," p. 238) ; and Sir Oliver Lodge : "As a matter of fact, the higher man of to-day is not worrying about his sins at all, still less about their punishment" (*Hibbert Journal*, vol. ii. No. 3, "Christian Doctrine").

† Vinet, "Etudes Litt. Fran.," vol. iii. : art. "Port-Royal."

seemed possible to find. It is no wonder that, in the desire to escape, a few chose perilous paths, and, though they chose in all good faith and walked steadfastly towards the highest goal, it must not be denied that they incurred responsibility for leading others less well equipped with wisdom and cool judgment into mortal danger. It is this charge which is brought most forcibly against the leaders of Port-Royal. The original call to Angélique Arnauld was to reform the abuses of the religious life as it was presented by daily experience in the convent at Port-Royal des Champs. She concentrated all the force of her nature on fulfilling the task that had been entrusted to her, and from the great success of her first effort sprang a movement that reached from end to end of France, and out beyond its boundaries. But the renewal of the religious life, the comprehension of the full meaning of the threefold vow, and the expulsion of sordid calculations from the administrative system of a convent: these things, though they were prominent in her mind, were not entirely engrossing. The spirit of sincerity expressed in them took other form. She died under suspicion of disloyalty and disobedience, but her every step, even from the first that claimed for her the applause of the Church and of the world, led her inevitably to the conclusion that history records as hers.

Forgiveness would not, perhaps, have been withheld from her if she had stood alone, if, as the aged Abbess of a community of cloistered nuns, she had, in her last years, maintained a doctrine not in complete accordance with the Church's teaching. But, whatever be individual judgment on her life-work, there can be no question that the Abbess Angélique was in great measure responsible for the tremendous influence of Port-Royal. She was the centre round which the company of her kinsfolk gathered, it was she who brought them to Port-Royal, and without her, if the spirit that they represent had taken form at all, it must have been under a different guise and known by another name. In that original aim of hers that concerned the realizing of the ideal of the religious, she was supported most of all by her own sisters. There were five of them, and the youngest is the only one who takes no

definite place in the development of the convent life. The other four were each destined to bear a special and important part in the work that was common to them all. Catherine, the eldest, was the last to enter the community. An unhappy marriage kept her nominally in the world till the prime of her life was past, but her last years in the cloister were but the sequence of those she had spent in active service and in a wonderful humility, while it pleased God to withhold the fulfilment of her great desire. Agnès, the next in age to Angélique, had a spiritual force that is peculiarly her own. Not less humble than Catherine, she won, perforce, a celebrity that was grievous to herself and a source of danger to the community. She had the same aptitude for arriving at unusual conclusions that brought Angélique into peril; but her world was less one of practical realities than was her sister's, and if she erred, her errors are those which dog the path of any who endeavour to express that for which human words have proved inadequate, and to reduce the aspirations of the mystic to the language of the worldling. Of them all, Anne-Eugenie was the happiest, because the simplest, in her life and death, for her younger sister Marie-Claire was a nun by nature, and though she was professed early and never wavered in her certainty of her vocation, it will be seen that she bore witness to the temperament of her race by a strange spiritual revolt that was as much an illustration of the force of character that made Port-Royal, as of the iron laws which were upheld there.

Again and again we find the instinctive determination and independence of the Arnaulds declaring itself in the different aspects of the development of Port-Royal. They were of that class who were the real strength of the kingdom in those days, the old-established middle-class, the noblesse de la robe, from which sprang a large proportion of the strong men who made the glory of the great monarch. By inheritance they had the keen incisive judgment, the tendency to criticize, that is fostered by a lawyer's practice. They brought these capacities to bear on the corruption of the time. At first it seemed that Angélique, supported by her sisters, had just the attributes that made the

performance of a special task a possibility. But, having done that which lay closest, her progress on her appointed path caused her to look beyond the limits of the cloister to the misery of the world, and thereupon she was stricken by that disease of universal pity "un mal dont on ne guerit pas," and could no longer be content with her natural sphere of conventual reform, but must needs pry into the causes of that stupefaction which seemed to quell even a wish for light in the darkened minds of an unhappy generation. That dangerous curiosity she shared, as it proved, with certain others among her contemporaries, and destiny brought them into collusion. Moved by a passionate love and reverence for the Catholic Church, they repelled the accusation that her enemies might bring against her, that she had lost the power to claim the hearts of men for Christ; yet, without abating their veneration in the least degree, they could not banish from their minds the sense that her true power, misused by human hands, was wasted, when human needs seemed most to be clamouring for it. The serious mind that once allows an entrance to this thought is impelled to seek both cause and remedy, but for its safety it should be equipped for such a quest by a rare capacity for balanced judgment.

The evils that confronted the Port-Royalists are freely recorded by historians, and it is plain that the means employed to meet them in the name of the Holy Catholic Church were inadequate, and tended in some cases to their increase rather than their diminution. The first guides of Port-Royal were Angélique Arnauld, and de Hauranne, Abbé de Saint-Cyran. The experience of the Abbess Angélique had taught her to meet sin by the extreme endeavour after self-renunciation. She saw no other remedy; but by self-knowledge she knew the searching difficulty of the endeavour, and therefore assumed that the strength to make it must be supernatural. Saint-Cyran began life with many years of study. When he looked up from the world of books to the world of men and women, he was appalled by what he saw. He looked for the true spirit of the Church as the centre of human life, and he failed to find it. For fifteen years

he and his friend Jansenius had meditated deeply on the works of S. Augustine. He had a natural tendency to austerity, and the sharp contrast between the theory of the early Church of Christ and the actual realities of his own day, threw him back on the doctrine of grace laid down by S. Augustine as the one explanation of the blindness of mankind. Prolonged and bitter controversy has proved that S. Augustine's teaching is susceptible of differing interpretations,—so also was Saint-Cyran's rendering of it. At its worst it is represented as converting "our most loving Creator into an arbitrary tyrant, imposing upon man laws too severe for his weak nature, without giving him supernatural power to fulfil them;" * at its best it is a supreme assertion of the absolute, and therefore arbitrary, power of God, coupled with S. Augustine's plea in dealing with Pelagian arguments, "that in the consideration of a mystery it is impossible to argue rightly from human ideas of justice." † It is not necessary to probe into the subtleties of Augustinian doctrine to follow the career of Angélique Arnauld. The absolute power of God was the truth which she drew from the mysteries of pain and iniquity that forced themselves upon her. She believed in the whole system of the Catholic Church, but her sense of Almighty power was so overwhelming that she could not admit a belief that man might help himself by easy methods. She gave no quarter to the Jesuit theory that, in face of prevailing degradation, the stricter ordinance of the early Church would be impracticable, and that a generous welcome should await all sinners who turned towards repentance. Those were the days when it was said of the sons of S. Ignatius, "Ecce qui tollit peccata mundi," ‡ and their tolerance was so well known that, as Jeremy Taylor expresses it, "confessors shall be enabled to answer according to every man's humour, and no man shall depart sad from their penitential chairs." §

Such free and general acceptance was advocated by men of piety and wisdom, but it was utterly alien to Angélique's

* Father Dalgairns, "Spirit of Jansenism," p. 5.

† See Darwell Stone, "Outlines of Christian Dogma," ch. xiii.

‡ First applied to Father Bauny, S.J.

§ Introduction "Ductor Dubitantium."

conception of the Majesty of an Almighty God. However deep the degradation of the individual or of the race, He had the power to summon one or many to look upwards, His grace had magic to support them while they climbed from sin to holiness, the path could need no levelling by human hands. There was nothing in that creed that was necessarily antagonistic to the teaching of the Church, but it tended towards independence of guidance from the Church's ministers, and it was just that tendency to independence which was the stumbling-block of the Port-Royalists. In spite of the reiterated assertions of his enemies, the writings of Saint-Cyran prove that he intended no disloyalty to the Church. It can be truly said that he, and those followers of his who founded their speculations on his teachings, "held the Church of which the Pope was head to be the one and only Catholic Church; but they also held that though the Church could never fail, it might be filled, even in its highest places, with corruption and apostasy, and that truth and hope in it might come to be represented by a feeble remnant, who, as long as, in spite of persecution and oppression, they clung to the Church, were safe from being confounded with the schismatics who denied and disowned the Church." * They were, in fact, self-chosen defenders of the Church from the errors which seemed to be shrouding her true beauty from the eyes of mankind, and by a paradox (of which there are other instances in ecclesiastical history) their zeal for her defence betrayed them into disobedience.

That Angélique was disobedient to the Church's mandate is undeniable; as is also the fact that her disobedience was an inevitable development of her unflinching criticism of that which seemed to her defective. She paid, perhaps, the penalty of those who seek "to lay down the law on the things which eye hath not seen, and press into the secrets of God's sublime commerce with men, in which, it may be, He differs with every single human soul." † In her case it was a very heavy penalty, although only those who share her fundamental faith in the Church of

* Dean Church, "Occasional Papers," No. 15.
† Walter Pater, "Miscellaneous Studies: Pascal."

Rome can fully appreciate its weight. She had, in fact, attempted the impossible. She was the abbess of a convent under direction of the Archbishop of Paris, and a subject of the king who held himself to be the watchdog of the Church, yet all unwittingly she strove "to be Catholic without being Roman."* The iron force of circumstance would not allow even the shadow of success to her or to her followers. Their assertion of their right to an opinion that ran counter to the judgment promulgated from the Vatican cannot be reconciled with the claim on implicit obedience made by the Church of Rome. To Angélique the consciousness of disobedience was heartbreaking, yet she could not obey. She lived and died too soon to share her difficulties with that vast company within the Church to-day who hold the Catholic faith as loyally as she did, yet withhold allegiance to the Pope; yet in her isolation, in her groping after an ideal that had not dawned on her generation, in the bitter disappointment of her last years, she claims the sympathy of all in whom her aspirations awake an echo of response.

It is with her, the strong courageous woman, spending her life in doing battle with shams and falsehood, that we are concerned. The vast range of interest that centres round the name of Port-Royal demands a larger canvas. And primarily the work of Angélique was the recall of the true spirit into religious life. Only when that was in some measure accomplished did she declare war against the prevalent love of ease and luxury. A pleasure-loving world would not accept her standards, only a few had courage to join their lot with hers: thus her own career ended in disaster, and a few years later Port-Royal itself came to complete and final downfall.

The hereditary enemies of the Port-Royalist traditions profess to see in them the first incentive to the lawlessness of the reign of terror. Inasmuch as every effort after reform has in it the elements of revolution, the charge cannot be utterly repudiated, but there is manifest absurdity in holding Angélique Arnauld responsible for outrages perpetrated on all she held most sacred.

* Father Dalgairns, "Spirit of Jansenism," p. 32.

The nuns and the hermits of Port-Royal may be legitimately regarded as representing its true spirit; but when persecution scattered them, there ceased to be any safeguard for the purity of their traditions—these were, in fact, indigenous, and could not survive the destruction of the convent walls.

The Jansenists of the later eighteenth century were a persecuted sect, distinguished by the strength, the narrowness, and the indefensible exaggerations which persecution generates, but they were not of the same race as the Arnaulds and the Pascals. The fact of Port-Royal, as it was in its period of real existence, had an inherent power whose scope we have no means of measuring, whose force appears the greater by reason of its limitations. And in the impression of it that remains there survives the same element of independence that alienated contemporary sympathies. It made no bid for popularity, and had no catchwords to please the fancy. Its standpoint was aggressive rather than conciliatory. And these qualities are as distinctive of the actual teaching of la Mère Angélique as of the general standard of the group who gather round her. The worldlings would not accept her claim because she asked too much, material delights had attained too firm a hold to be shaken by any spiritual solicitations. And because they would not listen, la Mère Angélique, as we see her across the centuries, seems to survey them sternly, and the words of de Rancé, the despairing protest of the disappointed apostle, are on her lips: "Quand on propose aux hommes les exemples et les actions des Saints, ils ne manquent pas de répondre que les conduites passées ne conviennent plus au siècle présent, que le monde n'en est plus capable. S'ils disoient qu'il n'en est plus digne, ils auraient raison." *

* De Rancé, "Maximes," No. 288.

ANGÉLIQUE OF PORT-ROYAL

CHAPTER I

THE AWAKENING OF LA MÈRE ANGÉLIQUE

The history of France, at all times so full of tragedy, becomes especially dramatic after the episode of the ill-starred Medicis rule has closed in anarchy and darkness. While Catherine held the reins of government, disaster was inevitable; but when she and her miserable sons have disappeared, an element of unexpectedness lends an extraordinary fascination to the supervening period. Each notable figure is well defined by words and deeds. Each one of the swiftly changing scenes is vivid and impressive. Henri IV., heroic, shameless, debonair, tramps across the stage, masking the state-craft of a Cromwell with the gallant swagger of d'Artagnan himself. Marie de Medicis—when her call comes—struggles and intrigues with rebel princes and upstart favourites, until Richelieu, as quiet as he was inexorable, paces to the foreground, and forces one and all to take their places in the wings. Behind him (and pushed forward sometimes to the footlights when policy demands it) we find the sickly King, Louis XIII., crushed to the earth by the resplendent mantle his father wore so bravely, yet fretting perpetually at the immutable coercion against which he knew his childish stubbornness was powerless. Anne of Austria makes her first entry almost unobserved (though her part was destined to have such importance), and her original claim to notice is as a study in human nature rather than as an agent in the fate of nations. When in due course we see her sink to her knees, abased and broken, with all the fire of the

proud House of Hapsburg frozen in her by the relentless will of the great Cardinal, she bears but little semblance to the imperious despot, who, a few years later, attempted to govern Paris from the Palais Royal, and deferred to no counsels but those of Mazarin.

The change of scene baffles all forecast by its suddenness, but the interest of the drama never slackens. Richelieu and Louis XIII. make their last exit almost simultaneously, the group of figures that Richelieu scattered gathers once more, threatening to eclipse the shiftless tyranny of Anne, and then the harlequinade of Frondists rushes on to whirl about in a dance that, in grim truth, became a Dance of Death. At last, just as the brain grows weary with surfeit of sensation, Louis XIV. emerges, seeming to calm the turmoil by his very presence, a great monarch before he is full grown, learning the secret of his strength from the failures of others, and arrogating greatness that was not his by right.

Truly there is no dearth of living interest in the history of France under Henri IV. and Richelieu and the great Louis. But there lurks a danger even in its fascination. When the obvious is so enthralling, there is no incentive to seek below the surface, and so the treasure of human knowledge that history at all times holds reserved from careless gazers is hidden even to those who have the understanding to perceive its riches. Thus men remain contented with the tangible, and the secrets that are learnt in silence and told only to those who hearken must needs be re-discovered by one and another in each succeeding generation, while the multitude accepts the visible and is content. The religious aspect of the national life is in every period an important consideration in the development of French history. Controversial questions were repeatedly the seed from which sprang the most ruinous warfare, both international and internecine, and, because of the strong religious instinct that so often underlies the frivolity of the Gallic nature, the struggles that were primarily struggles of opinion were not a whit less deadly than those that concerned the occupation of a throne or the

partition of territory. But when the influence of learning became more widespread, thought was permitted to mature in silence before it assumed the garb of words, and questions that, in fact, were of far graver import to humanity than the just demarcation of a boundary or the recognition of a lawful claim to sovereignty, were accorded, by those who were fitted to approach them, the awe and reverence that they deserved.

The thinkers of the Middle Ages whose writings are the classics of mystical theology paid little heed to politics. The sense of proportion which mankind elects to describe as rational is inevitably displaced from a mind that is perpetually concentrated on the thought of God, and a man who regards direct interposition by the Hand of God, in the cause he deems the purest, as the most probable solution of a pressing difficulty, will seldom command the reliance of his fellows, though such an expectation may be only the logical sequence of the faith that he and they profess. Moreover, an honest personal endeavour after holiness ran so far counter to the ordinary practice of society that those who made it were apt to be regarded as dangerous persons and breeders of sedition. It was treason of this nature which brought disgrace upon Port-Royal, and made it the centre of the fiercest and most protracted controversy in a controversial age, and it was by this means that the name of an insignificant convent won a world-wide celebrity. For Port-Royal has an importance independent of its position as a nursery for theologians, independent also of its imputed responsibility for sowing seeds of revolution. In the glory that has justly been connected with the name by its relation to Pascal, to Arnauld, to Saint-Cyran, and to Racine, there is a tendency to forget that Port-Royal was, originally and always, a convent of women, and that not only its literary celebrity but its influence, impossible to disavow, as an inspiration towards personal holiness in the national life, was due to a woman, whom the Church has not seen fit to canonize, but whom other women might do well to keep in hallowed remembrance.

A close study of the life of Angélique Arnauld, Abbess of Port-Royal, brings us in touch with many sides of feminine

human nature. The ordinary and colourless conception of a nun in the average mind was certainly not realized in her person. She loved the world keenly, even immoderately. When the time came when it was ordained that she should feel the call of God, she wrestled with Him and endeavoured to escape from the Hand laid upon her; but when she yielded, it was with the completeness that perhaps is only possible to the strong, who, having great things to yield, have no temptation to cling to that which is small, and so give unreservedly. From the moment that she took her rightful place as Abbess of Port-Royal, through all the vicissitudes of removal, of deposition, of reforms and failures, she was a definite power, her influence on her generation was far-reaching, her example and exhortations raised the standard of conventual discipline all through the country, and the inspiration which she gave to the renewal of religious life, to the re-discovery of the true principle of self-surrender, is, we believe, still bearing fruit at the present day. Her place, without doubt, is in the foremost rank of notable women, even though the age she lived in was—to a strange degree—an age when women took the lead in many movements—social, literary, and revolutionary. And because leadership is not, and should not be, natural to the sex, there was, undeniably, something abnormal in her character and in its development. But this element, though it must be admitted with regard to la Mère Angélique individually, does not by any means apply to all those who came beneath her immediate influence. The world is always disposed to relegate all movements prompted by deep religious feeling to the category of the abnormal, the sacrifice of worldly prospects for the more perfect service of Christ is generally attributed to hypnotic influence or to some (hitherto unsuspected) weakness of mind. The Port-Royalists have very generally been classed as unbalanced fanatics by successive generations, beginning with their own. Their austerity, the curious mixture of humility and strength that characterized them, their unswerving faithfulness to their vows, in a word, the reality of the religion that they professed and practised, was a reproach to their contemporaries as it is to all

who consider their history. But, though their lives were very different from those led by the average men and women in their own day or any other, the more closely we can bring ourselves into touch with the little band of courteous hermits who made the literary reputation of Port-Royal, or with the community of pious women within the convent walls, the more obvious becomes the lesson which it seems to be the mission of Port-Royal to teach the world : namely, that there is nothing abnormal in the perpetual search for God by the renunciation of earthly and sensual satisfactions, but that the unnatural condition is that of creatures who acknowledge the existence of their Creator, but do not seek to learn His will.

Port-Royal, reformed by la Mère Angélique and directed by Saint-Cyran, may be said to have uplifted the standard of Christ before the eyes of men. Eyes that had hitherto been holden caught a glimpse of the sweetness of the service of Christ, and could no longer rest on the glory of worldly reputation. That the result was sometimes sensational should not be matter for astonishment ; it was a sensational period, and the contrast between life in the world and the Imitation of Christ was peculiarly vivid in days when the world was apt to mean moral degradation of a kind that has now become uncommon among civilized nations. When la Mère Angélique was Jaqueline Arnauld, a child in her father's house, Henri IV., that chivalrous and romantic hero, was on the throne of France. What life at Court meant then is very easily discovered by any one who has the enterprise to dip into the Memoirs of the time. Those of de Bassompierre * may be fairly taken as representative, though in fact de Bassompierre lived a more regular life than most of his contemporaries. In his company we may see the standard of conduct set up by men of honour, the complete disregard for human life, of any obligation towards the poor, above all, of any obligation to accord respect to women of any rank. To take one instance from a thousand, de Bassompierre was affianced to Mlle. de Montmorency, a young and very beautiful heiress. The

* See "Petitot Memoires," 2nd series, vol. 20.

King, nearly forty years her senior, forgot his age and dignity in a sudden infatuation for her. The marriage with de Bassompierre was stopped, and a fresh one between the bride and Condé, the King's ill-favoured cousin, was hurriedly arranged. It was generally believed that the newly-made princess, fresh from her convent education, would step into a position at Court which Gabrielle d'Estrée had left vacant, and it was a theme for astonishment, in itself sufficiently significant, that her husband, himself a prince of the blood, intervened, and suddenly and forcibly removed her from the kingdom.

The sequel, which plunged France into a useless war, is a matter of international history. The heroine of the story, as the mother of the great Condê, is an important figure in the history of France ; as the mother of Madame de Longueville she was of special importance to Port-Royal, and the story itself suggests the prevailing indifference towards morality. Neither rank, nor youth, nor innocence, were any protection ; it may be believed that scarcely any ladies of the Court preserved an untarnished reputation, and even discovery was no longer greatly dreaded when the Queen was numbered among the offenders. Public opinion having ceased to act as a restraint, the evil found no remedy save violence. The scandal of the last love of Henri IV. was forced out of recollection by many others. Louis XIII., the boy-King, caused the Maréchal d'Ancre (the Italian whom his mother had brought from Florence and made Constable of France) to be murdered in the courtyard of the Louvre, and his subjects applauded his courage, but the wise must have seen both in the act itself and in the approval accorded to it, another proof of the degradation of King and people. Nor did the personal austerity of Louis XIII. do much to raise the popular standard ; and at his death, when Anne of Austria, with the blemish of the Buckingham romance upon her, stepped into sudden independence, the general licence in manners and conduct seemed likely to reproduce the social conditions under Henri IV. That it did not do so, that even the early court of Louis XIV., dissolute though it was, had a suggestion of higher aspiration, an occasional revulsion to a

theory of self-condemnation, may be attributed to influences that had their root in Port-Royal. Madame de Rambouillet and her circle bore their part in cleansing the methods of literary expression; the French Academy and its vigorous criticism suggested possibilities of mental discipline, but a motive stronger than a desire for refinement or cultivation was needed to make self-control a common practice among men and women. The motive was at first possessed only by a few, and of these the majority looked to Port-Royal for their inspiration. At Port-Royal there was no slackness, no uncertainty of purpose. The same burning light was brought to bear on all, and those who shrank from humiliation were ill-advised if they took their difficulties there.

La Mère Angélique would have claimed no leadership in those later developments that made the name of her community so familiar on the lips of citizens and courtiers, but the great men who had woven their interest and ambition around that name must have realized to the full that it was she who had first cherished into life that which was the true spirit of Port-Royal; the spirit of severity towards personal sin, of charity towards that of others. The element of contradiction in that combination is in keeping with the position of la Mère Angélique herself towards the community, for her original appointment was a most striking instance of the abuse which was undermining the whole system of religious life. At seven years old,* the succession to supremacy in the old-established monastery of Port-Royal was secured to her, and the fact that she was the child of parents who respected the Church and maintained a high standard in their private practice proves sufficiently the entire distortion of the real monastic theory at the period. The Arnaulds would not have been tempted into accepting a benefit that public opinion regarded as in any way sacrilegious or even illegitimate. They were a race who commanded respect in whatever profession they entered, and were gifted, almost without exception, with a natural strength of principle and solidity of intellect that was especially rare in

* Nicholas Fontaine, "Mem.," vol. i. p. 23.

that period of sensationalism. De la Mothe Arnauld, grandfather of la Mère Angélique, was a Huguenot at the time of S. Bartholomew, and his descendants inherited from him the resolute spirit that made them Jansenists when Alexander VII. ruled at the Vatican. The moment of the conversion of De la Mothe Arnauld is not chronicled. The fact of his errors must have been a disturbing remembrance to his grandchildren, and it is possible that he never was converted ; but his second son, Antoine Arnauld, Advocate-General to Henri IV., was a true son of the Church, and married in 1585 the daughter of M. Marion,* a notable lawyer, and a favourite in Court circles. Both these worthy gentlemen were held in the highest estimation, morally and professionally, and M. Marion considered that he was doing a virtuous act when he used his interest with Henri IV. to procure provision for two of his numerous grandchildren from the heritage of the Church. Through his influence Jaqueline and Jeanne, the second and third daughters of Antoine Arnauld, were installed at Port-Royal and S. Cyr, the one being seven and the other five years old. Jeanne—so celebrated as la Mère Agnès—became Abbess of S. Cyr at once, the throne of Port-Royal was not vacant, but Jaqueline was made coadjutrice to the aged Abbess.

Port-Royal was under the direction of the Abbot of Citeaux, and he, M. de la Croix, was as loose of principle as the average monk of that period. He made no objection to installing the child Jaqueline Arnauld, though her age really unfitted her even for admission to the community which she was to rule. The fact that the King desired it cancelled any possible objection in the mind of the complaisant Abbot, but that argument would have been less imperative at the Vatican, and possibly the King's desire to see the granddaughter of M. Marion presiding at an obscure monastery was not strong enough to project itself to Rome. Consequently, a difficulty arose that might well have been regarded as defeating the prudent project of M. Marion. If the Pope were asked to confirm the nomination of a child of eight as Mother-Abbess to an order which fixed the age of novices

* Guilbert, "Mem. de Port-Royal," vol. i. part i. p. 211.

at sixteen, he would naturally refuse, and before Jaqueline attained to years of discretion the whole position might have altered and the desired post be lost to the family.

For the credit of the name of Arnauld it is desirable that M. Marion * should be made responsible for the arrangement that secured Port-Royal to his descendants. The dedication of his two granddaughters to the religious life is generally attributed to him, and his interest with Henri IV. was certainly greater than that of Antoine Arnauld. Nevertheless, though he was probably the chief offender, Arnauld was an accomplice, and between them Jaqueline was represented as seventeen instead of eight, and so obtained the papal sanction. To modern eyes it appears to be a most discreditable fraud, and the whole proceeding is strangely significant of the crying need for that reform in monastic life which Jaqueline herself was destined to bring about. But the fact of the decay of discipline and loosening of the spiritual bonds, without which monastic rule has no true relation to religion, does in some degree discount the guilt of the conspirators in so far as their offence is viewed as an outrage on the Church. M. Marion was a business man, and regarded the opportune provision for his granddaughters as payment for services rendered to the Crown. Commissions in the army were in like manner bestowed on children whose age unfitted them to fulfil any duty connected with their nominal position, but whose parents had some claim on the Crown that could thus be disposed of. In both instances the responsibility involved in the dispensing of patronage was greatly abused, but the actual result not worse in one case than in the other. Jaqueline Arnauld at seventeen was no more likely to be the fit and proper person to preside at Port-Royal than she promised to be at eight, and at either age the point at issue was not her fitness for the office, but her grandfather's enterprise and diplomacy in obtaining it. Nor—even if we regard it as a "case of conscience"—could M. Marion have been oppressed with misgivings that the community would suffer, for though it was not numbered among the worst examples of the disorder prevalent

* See Clemencet, "Hist. de Port-Royal," vol. i. p. 16.

among the convents in France, and the nuns of Port-Royal were guiltless of the dark offences charged to their sisters elsewhere, their light-mindedness and folly cancelled any claim to the respect to which their vows might legitimately entitle them.

"It was thirty years since there had been any preaching at Port-Royal except at a few 'professions.'" The confessor of the community was a Bernardine monk who was so ignorant that he hardly understood his paternoster, knew no word of his catechism, and never touched any book but his breviary. His chief occupation was hunting, and the other monks who came to the convent came there only to discourse with the nuns of the gaieties at Citeaux and Clairvaux, "les bonnes coutumes de l'ordre," as they termed their disorders. Communion was received only once a month and at great festivals, and not then if these occurred at times of merry-making, for then the confessor was busy masquerading, and had not leisure.

Under these circumstances, it is a little difficult to understand how a high-principled gentleman could make up his mind to remove his daughter from the care of a wise mother and leave her at the mercy of frivolous women who made a religious vow an excuse for a life of careless self-indulgence, even when by so doing he was secured from all future responsibility in providing for her. Custom is answerable for much. Antoine Arnauld probably accepted his father-in-law's arrangement without deep reflection either as to its ethical soundness or its relation to his daughter's welfare, and Jaqueline duly took the veil at an age when other girls were hardly out of the nursery. The customs of Port-Royal, as has been indicated, were sufficiently unseemly, and the child was little likely to learn much good there, but her destiny required her to incur a far greater risk of moral disaster than would have threatened her at Port-Royal itself. Belonging to the same order, and equally dependent on the Bernardine monks, was the Convent of Maubuisson, and, at the age of nine, Jaqueline Arnauld, novice, but not yet confirmed, was sent thither with the ostensible purpose of being trained for her future office.

The moral corruption at Maubuisson had reached a point which defies description. It was under the care of Angélique d'Estrées, sister to the celebrated Gabrielle. Her nomination as Abbess had come—like that of Jaqueline herself—from Henry IV., and in the security of royal favour she gave free rein to those lawless instincts which she shared with Gabrielle. The King's mistress came often to Maubuisson, and many of his courtiers followed her. The Abbess Angélique * seems to have been a beautiful and fascinating woman, and under her influence, and among women who were her constant associates, Jaqueline Arnauld spent two of the most impressionable years of girlhood, and was prepared to make full profession as a nun and receive the sacrament of confirmation. At this latter ceremony she took the name of Angélique, partly out of compliment to her hostess, partly, it would seem, because difficulties at Rome were apprehended, and under a fresh name it would be easier to secure her position at Port-Royal.

In the summer of 1602 the old Abbess died, and it required all the skill and diplomacy of M. Marion to cover the too evident unseemliness in the age and condition of her successor. For if Angélique was ever to be Abbess, it was necessary to instal her at once, any suggestion of keeping the office open for her till she was fit to enter upon it would have provoked inquiry, and inquiry must infallibly have disqualified her for ever holding it at all. At any rate, the death of the old Abbess summoned her from her dangerous environment at Maubuisson, and, child though she was, she seems to have been upheld by a curious sense of responsibility in her new position, and adhered with rigid punctuality to the rule of the order concerning the saying of Office. That her prayers were the merest repetition of familiar words cannot be doubted, but she would probably have found it very easy to obtain dispensation from an obligation that was often irksome, and it is to her credit that even then she had sufficient idea of self-discipline to adhere to the detail of her vow. Her life was, nevertheless, a very easy one. She saw her relatives

* Guilbert, "Mem. de Port-Royal," vol. i. part i. p. 259.

very often; her mother was so solicitous about her welfare that she would drive down unexpectedly from Paris to surprise the community, and so assure herself that the peaceful conditions under which she always saw them were not assumed when her visits were anticipated. But it would seem that there was nothing in the conduct of the young Abbess that required concealment. She was fond of ease and enjoyment, and she obtained both. So long as she was a child, she took pride in the state and dignity of her most unsuitable position. Peculiarity appeals to the childish imagination, and Angélique was of the temperament that loves personal importance. It was only when the instincts of a child gave place to the cravings of womanhood that her superiority over a company of sixteen nuns ceased to be satisfying to Angélique. At Port-Royal romances were read when bad weather prevented the nuns from taking their recreation out-of-doors, and the custom is responsible for a part of Angélique's difficulties. To modern taste, the long-winded histories of troubadours and captive ladies and knights-errant, with which these idle hours were beguiled, would be more wearisome than the lives of the saints which were prescribed for their study by their rule. It can safely be assumed that the works of Rabelais or Marguerite d'Angoulême were never found in the hands of the nuns of Port-Royal, though Madame Angélique d'Estrée may have enlivened a dull season at Maubuisson with such intellectual fare. But fiction—even of the dreariest type—has an influence on certain minds involving serious danger, and la Mère Angélique was endowed with a keen intellect and a vivid imagination. Her life presented insufficient scope for the use of either. She had never known either labour or suffering, the conditions of existence were easy, her future was secure, and she had not the smallest difficulty in fulfilling every duty that her position seemed to demand.

As a result, her mind was void of any light or shadow, memory and anticipation alike were blank, and the loves and sorrows of imaginary persons assumed a false importance. An average girl of fifteen, with many idle hours on her hands and no

strong personal interests, cannot associate long with the heroes and heroines of romance without projecting herself into their environment, re-arranging the setting to her fancy, and creating for herself a world in which she can play a part exactly suited to her estimation of her own capacities. There are endless possibilities of delight for one who can step into dreamland at any moment, but the danger of suffering is at least as great as the probability of enjoyment. It requires a mind balanced by experience to return to reality from the realm of imagination without an overwhelming sense of distaste and discouragement. To Angélique, the Girl-Abbess, the danger was greater than to any of her sisters in the world. However lax may be its accomplishment, there is an element of terror in a vow that binds for life, and she, having let her fancy play with images that would have been innocent enough to other girls of her age, was recalled again and again to the recollection that for her they were not, and never could be, innocent; that for her there could be no romance except on the printed page; that, without any choice of her own, the joys of wifehood and of motherhood had been filched from her, and the coming years stretched before her in a vista of drear monotony.

The portals of Port-Royal in those days may have had no bolts, the young Abbess might receive who she would, and no tongue would have dared to criticize her so long as open scandal was kept at bay; nevertheless, it is clear that she felt the clang of the door behind her to be as irrevocable, the walls that rose up around her as impassable, as if she was languishing in the most rigorous of the Spanish convents. Many years later, her sister, la Mère Agnès, said of another Mother-Abbess: "elle a toujours regardé la religion comme un forçat de galère regarde sa chaine." * Gentle Agnès de S. Paul, to whom "la religion" was, and had always been, the privileged condition permitted to a few favoured human beings, was moved, it would seem, to a certain measure of scorn towards this unhappy individual, yet her words describe a state of mind with which la Mère Angélique was quite familiar.

* "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," vol. ii. No. 395.

It is well to realize the elements of tragedy in her position.* The after-career of Jaqueline Arnauld betrayed the strength of her will and the eagerness of her natural disposition. Listlessness was impossible to her; in all that she undertook she showed a tendency to violence. Yet when with the passing years she ceased to be content with the things of childhood, she found that a chain confined the energy and strength of her young limbs, and every tradition of family, of society, and of conscience, forbade even an effort to free herself. Her inward revolt was as complete as if she had torn her veil to shreds and gone to a Court ball in silk and diamonds. In the background of her mind, moreover, there was the dangerous recollection that her paternal grandfather had been a Huguenot; that there were sisters of her father dwelling at Rochelle; and that, if she could once reach that stronghold of heresy, she might be secure of every encouragement to forget the unwelcome bonds of her dedication, and might perchance exchange the monotony of convent rule for the mysterious joys of love and marriage. By her own authority we know that she allowed these perilous thoughts an entrance to her mind, and once admitted there was no further possibility of peace for her amid the serene conditions of existence at Port-Royal. In vain she sought distraction in rumbling hither and thither in an ancient chaise belonging to the community, in receiving and returning visits, or in study of a kind not contemplated by S. Benedict. Some women might have effected a permanent compromise between the claim of an involuntary religious vow and an overmastering desire for the good things of this world, and so satisfied both conscience and self-love, but the via media was always closed to Jaqueline Arnauld, and the extreme of self-renunciation cost her less suffering than that which she endured when endeavouring to serve Mammon without definitely denying God.

We find the clearest indication of the condition of her own life at that juncture in her reminiscences of the youth of her sister, for the similarity of their lot intensified the contrast between their characters, and shows Angélique before and after that point

* See Guilbert, "Mem. de Port-Royal," vol. i. part i. p. 286.

of conversion which has so strangely definite a place in her development, not as she appeared to others, but as she knew herself to be. The impression would be less convincing if she was intending, as in other passages she does intend, to describe her own experiences, but at the moment she is concentrated on the thought of Agnès, and so unconsciously reveals herself.

"I believe I ought to make known the manner in which God led la Mère Agnès," she says, "it being one of the greatest examples of His good will and providence towards our community. When my office here was first procured for me, in 1599, the Abbey of S. Cyr, which is but two miles from Port-Royal des Champs, was secured to her though she was but five years old. So great was her inclination for all religious exercises, especially for Divine Service, that at nine years old she knew the Psalter by heart and all the chants, and was practised in every ceremony, going through them all with marvellous exactness."

Agnès was actually Abbess at S. Cyr from her first entrance there, but the authority was deputed to one of her nuns, and when Angélique assumed government at Port-Royal the two were much together. "My sister was often brought to see me," she continues, "and in the middle of our games, when the hour for office rang she would lay aside everything to attend it or say it. When she saw me careless of it she expostulated with me. To which I replied that when I was older I would go to some place and do penitence as a lay-sister. This put her in such consternation that she did not dare to say any more." It would be hard to imagine a more illuminating vision of the pair. Jaqueline as ardent in her games as in all else, and frankly irritated at the interruption of the convent bell; Agnès, gentle and dreamy, following the lead of her playfellow until that other summons recalled her to the custom that was more than second nature; both, in their respective moods of submission and resentment, equally oblivious of any real meaning in the oft-recurring claim to devotional exercise. Agnès was devout just as, under other circumstances, she would have been studious, because it was her temperament; and Jaqueline, had they both been school-girls,

would have mocked at her sister's diligence with the same unreasoning petulance as was aroused by her devotion. Yet even then the inexorable shadow of their vow hung over them both; the half-frightened remonstrance of the one and the scoffing rejoinder of the other have more significance than school-girl bickering. The attitude of Agnès towards religion when comprehension of its meaning came to her was always one of awe, and the future penance so lightly suggested by the Girl-Abbess foreshadow the fierce desires to which the contrition of her later years inspired her. Agnès, it would seem, was hardly less dismayed by the reality of penitence than she had been by the flippant suggestion of it; she was as intense in her realization of the privilege of their vocation; but her sister's violence had no reflection in her gentle nature. "When I had been called by God she was astonished," writes Angélique, naïvely, "and though she was delighted to see that I was given to prayer, she was repelled by my other practices, especially by the shabbiness of my apparel, being herself very particular. She came with me to our home, and on our return I left her at S. Cyr. Soon after she came again to see me and seemed very unwell, and I, being more than ever fortified in my desire of complete dedication to God, was inspired with a wish to claim her also. There were difficulties in this, for she clung to her order, and also, or so it seemed to me, to the dignities of her nominal position. I petted her a great deal, and by degrees her love of prayer overwhelmed her, and, weak as she then was, she dragged herself to the church and remained there in prayer for hours on end. She was torn betwixt her love of me and her dislike to giving up her rule and her community. At length I made up my mind to say to my father (who came to see us and observed her extreme languor) that it was depression, and that if he could make up his mind to remove her from S. Cyr she would be better. I did so partly because of the great desire I had to have her with me, and partly because I wished my father's conscience to be relieved concerning that abbey. My father—believing that this was the real reason of her indisposition—told her that he only desired her happiness,

and that if she would like to remain with me he was quite willing. She was much astonished, but she feared to repudiate what I had said about her.

"By degrees after that the true desire to be a nun developed in her, and even when she might legitimately have been superior she shrank from it greatly. I would not give her the veil of our order for a year after she wished for it, that I might test her thoroughly. And by her submission, in humility and lowliness, she became a completely different being.

"While she was still a novice, by the advice of the Capuchin Father, who was our director, I made her mistress of the other novices. I had, till then, held that office myself, for lack of any one in the least degree fit for it. She was most successful. The Father told me, when she was only seventeen, that she was one of the most perfect nuns in France."

The idea of perfection in a nun did not come easily to Angélique, and ere light dawned, her very soul had been torn and tortured with perpetual questionings. It is not wonderful that she fell ill; a secret despair was poisoning her, and the weakness resulting from a prolonged attack of fever was a providential hindrance to any irrevocable action that would have involved her whole family in her own disgrace. The tenderness of the nuns to her, when she was recovering, was consoling, but these amiable women could be of no lasting good to her, for they were themselves in darkness as complete as hers regarding the true meaning of their condition of life, and were only more resigned because they had not been given that Divine discontent which was eventually to work the salvation—not only of the Mother-Abbess herself—but of the whole community.

It was a fine evening in the Lent of 1608, and la Mère Angélique was walking in the convent garden when the messenger of her destiny was sent to her. She was an unhappy girl of sixteen, continually rebelling against her lot, continually restless under the light yoke of her religious vow, wholly and completely devoid of understanding of the mysterious possibilities of the religious life. Humanly there seemed no reason why her

career, with its false beginning and unpromising development, should be less sterile than that of any one of a thousand other nuns at that moment in bondage to the Church; but it is impossible not to feel, as we follow the thread of her history, that she was led specially and definitely by the Hand of God to accomplish a work demanded by the condition of her Church and her country at that moment; and that, if she had failed in response, if she had attempted to content herself with ordinary obedience to an elastic rule of virtue, such as was practised by the better type of her sisters in religion, she would inevitably have ended in that apostasy to which she had already been tempted. To many who cherish the welfare of the Church, Jaqueline Arnauld appears as a deliverer by a Divine appointment as evident as that which set Jeanne d'Arc apart from the rest of her generation, and, strangely enough, both were required to see the glories of their first effort fade into the darkness of failure and disaster ere they died.

The summons came to la Mère Angélique somewhat prosaically. Jeanne d'Arc saw visions and dreamed dreams; Mme. Guyon was accosted in the streets of Paris by angel visitants, and knew herself thenceforward to be superior to ordinary humanity; but Jaqueline Arnauld, the young Abbess, had no sensational warning. In the twilight of the long spring evening a Capuchin friar appeared at the door and claimed his right to preach to the nuns in the convent chapel. Preaching was rare at Port-Royal, and the right hour for it had passed, but the Abbess loved the intellectual diversion of a good sermon, and she gave orders that the chapel should be lighted, and the friar's homily be heard instead of the evening reading of a pious book ordained by S. Benedict.

The nuns and the Mother-Abbess took their places, and Père Basile began. It is recorded that he was young * and by no means of blameless life (not long afterwards, moreover, he joined the Huguenot party), but it may be that the theme he had chosen inspired him to rise above the atmosphere he generally breathed,

* Clemencet, "Hist. de Port-Royal," vol. i. p. 25.

or else he was merely the mouthpiece of God's message to la Mère Angélique. He spoke of the humiliations of the Son of God, of the Incarnation, of the babe in the manger at Bethlehem, of the child who was subject unto His parents. It must all have been familiar to the ears of the assembled community, very likely many of them did not listen very carefully, but to Angélique the meaning of the oft-repeated story was suddenly revealed. She sat there in the dim chapel of Port-Royal des Champs among the peaceful half-slumbering sisters, and the light burst suddenly upon her darkened soul, and the reality of the Life on the shores of Galilee and its meaning to herself pierced the thick wall of indifference, and drew all her wandering thoughts and aspirations to one centre as to a magnet.

It was characteristic of her and of the after-traditions of Port-Royal that Père Basile had so little to do with her transformation. It was the message, not the man, that concerned her, and Père Basile was sped upon his way immediately. It was the lot appointed for la Mère Angélique that she should struggle through the most tremendous experience that is ever given to human beings without help in any way adequate to her need. When she was dying, more than fifty years later, her sister condoled with her because she was denied the consolation of the presence of M. Singlin, her confessor and director. "I do not regret it," she answered promptly; "I know he prays for me, and that is enough. I have great reverence for him and for all those who help us, but I cannot put any man in the place of God." * In her first awakening to the true religious life she learned that lesson, and the first awakening had involved no small element of terror. The claim of Christ in its full meaning came to her suddenly, and she saw the error of her former ways with torturing distinctness. "My joy in the religious life became as great as my disgust with it had been formerly," she says; but even while she rejoiced and looked forward, she was full of misgivings regarding the past, and specially penetrated by a sense of unworthiness to be the leader of others.

* "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," vol. ii. No. 360.

She had then no more hope of escape from the responsibility of an Abbess, however, than she had had formerly from the restrictions on a nun, and she could only seek compensation by voluntary mortifications and humiliations to which in later years she looked back with some amusement. The absence of any idea of direction, which is proved by her record of her own vagaries at this time, is indeed particularly interesting when we consider it in relation to the after history of Port-Royal and the position occupied by Saint-Cyran and by la Mère Angélique herself towards penitents and nuns.

But her ideas of reform were, at first, as personal as her former revolt had been. There is an element of individuality which it is easy to label as selfishness in a great conflict of the inner life. Persons and things alike lose importance, are even hardly recognized as existing; and in a first realization of the greatness of God, the force of contrast is apt to destroy all sense of proportion towards ordinary surroundings. A soul cannot deny its own existence, but it can be so overwhelmed by a glimpse of the Divine as to forget humanity. La Mère Angélique did not maintain a balance of reason; she was exaggerated and violent under the influence of the new revelation that had come to her. But it may be admitted that the equable temperament is seldom bestowed on those who have to fight for a great object against great odds, and la Mère Angélique could not have stirred the very heart of her generation, as she was privileged to do, had she not been touched with the divine madness of the fanatic, and purified her soul by gratuitous self-torture in the first months of regeneration. For she had loved the world, and its bonds were interwoven with her vigorous character. When she heard the call of Christ in the convent chapel, the attractions of the world seemed in a moment to crumble into dust, but the first generous impulse of renunciation gave no foretaste of what her sacrifice must cost. Instincts so keen as hers die hard, and only by experience could she learn the deep and searching pain of veritable yielding. It was necessary that she should gain knowledge of herself as the first step towards renunciation, and the knowledge was inseparable

from a passion of self-reproach. In solitude in the peaceful convent she struggled with herself, inflicting pain on her body in a half-acknowledged hope that she might thereby lessen the agony of her mind, exaggerated in all she thought and did, and yet with violent hands laying hold on a reality that seldom yields itself to the temperate touch of gentle fingers. She had fought and won her battle before she was eighteen, and she had fought it out unaided; yet, as we have indicated already, she afterwards organized a complete and stringent system of direction for the community, and thereby bore her testimony to the keenness of her own past suffering.

She herself found no support in spiritual guidance till ten years later. Port-Royal had its recognized confessor, and when la Mère Angélique had begun to practise her theories of reform, it became her great desire that he might be one by whom the sisters of the community would benefit, but she herself had braved so many dangers unassisted, and found her way among devious paths with such evident success, that it seemed as though she needed no direction conveyed by a human channel. She does not record that she felt the need of it, though it is strange if in her post of spiritual responsibility she did not do so. S. Teresa desired for twenty years to meet a director in whom she could confide, and Angélique's intense realization of Divine agency in the methods of the Church made it only logical that she should have regarded adequate direction as the greatest blessing God could vouchsafe to her.

"I used to go forth alone," wrote Mme. de Chantal, who was the cherished friend of la Mère Angélique, "and call passionately upon our Lord, 'By the truth of Thy word, my God, I beseech Thee, to send to me one who is Thy servant and of true saintliness to be my spiritual guide, to teach me Thy will and all that Thou desirest of me, and I promise and vow before Thee that all which he bids me I will do.'" *

The energy of the prayer conveys the urgency of the need.

* "Mem. écrit par S. Jeanne de Chantal" (quoted "Vie" by Bougaud, p. 85).

In the ebb and flow of impulses, in the conflict betwixt the bidding of conscience and the voice of public opinion, it was hard for a solitary soul to assure herself that she was following the prompting of the Divine will. It is significant, nevertheless, that these pious women did not suffer themselves to be cajoled into leaning on a staff that was not really able to support them, but held upon their way as best they might unaided, till God sent the help He destined for them. The labours of S. Teresa bore threefold fruit when S. Juan d'Avila gave them his blessing, and Marie de Chantal found her prayer answered with a fulness beyond her dreams when François de Sales was brought into her life.

They, however, had each realized their need and were continually anticipating its fulfilment. Angélique, with the independence of her strong-minded race, stood alone, both with outward circumstances and with the more subtle hindrances which she found in her own nature. She was at first over severe in the reform she exacted from others, and she imposed an iron rule of discipline upon herself. There is an element of ferocity in her determination to cauterize the least traces of self-love as her constant self-examination revealed them to her, and perpetual introspection promised to defeat its own true object. Strong measures, no doubt, were needed in dealing with herself and with the abuses of the life she shared, and the excess of her first fervour may have accomplished what a temperate course could not, but the call to Jaqueline Arnauld had been plainly the call of Christ, and she in answering was in danger of forgetting that His rule is a rule of love.

In eleven years of struggle she learnt to deny herself and to trust in God, but it was His purpose to lead her to another turning-point, when by a human agency she might once more receive His message. And this time His chosen messenger was not merely the mouthpiece of a single summons. François de Sales was led to Maubuisson, where la Mère Angélique was then presiding, and the course of her own life and the history of Port-Royal was altered by his softening touch. "Tout est divin, en

effet, ne l'oublions pas, dans la conduite des âmes." * It is hard to read the story of a soul's development and deny the truth of that assertion, yet to admit it is to give a greater pledge of faith and resignation than human nature offers readily.

Without François de Sales there can be little doubt that the deepening impulse towards an outward act of self-abasement would have led la Mère Angélique to quit Port-Royal that she might seek the lowest place elsewhere, and the history of the community, and perhaps with it the history of France, would have taken a different channel. But when—though perhaps unconsciously—she was in urgent need of him, François de Sales came to la Mère Angélique, as years before he had come to Jeanne de Chantal, and opened a fresh window of her soul through which the light might pour.

She had desired to see him, but only with a sort of curiosity ; hitherto the leaders of the Church with whom she had come in contact (she says that she knew those of the highest reputation) had aroused her respect only, they had not touched a responsive note in her. She knew that she stood very much alone, but her humility, deep and intense as it was, was before God ; before man she had till then been self-contained and self-reliant. Yet face to face with François de Sales the strong defences of her inner life gave way. Years afterwards she wrote that the inspiration of God was "truly and visibly" in him. "I had never before found in any one that which I found in him."

He came to Maubuisson to confirm a young daughter of M. de Bonœil, a pious gentleman who held high office at Court, but he found very speedily that his real mission there was to la Mère Angélique. The grave young abbess—she was then only twenty-seven—made a deep impression upon him. "Dieu m'a fait connoitre qu'il vous reserve pour des choses de grande conséquence," he wrote to her, "dont vous avez grand sujet de rendre graces à sa Divine Majesté." † It is only to a very

* Bougaud, "Vie de S. Jeanne de Chantal," p. 95.

† September, 1619.

exceptional woman that such words could be spoken with impunity, but de Sales had the gift of intuition, and knew that his hearer was building the fabric of her life on so deep a foundation of humility that no words from human lips could be a danger to her.

After their meeting in that Easter of 1619, Angélique never again desired to rule her life unaided. Under his direction she went into retreat—there in the convent of Maubuisson where two years of her wayward childhood had been spent under the evil rule of Angélique d'Estrées—and she made to him a full and general confession, opening her heart, so she records, as she had never done before to any one. A great peace, hitherto undreamed of, came upon her. She had already learnt to find God everywhere; with profound joy she now accepted that it was His will to send her guidance so that her spirit need be no longer torn by misgivings as to His designs for her. She was spared the danger and disappointment which may sometimes result from this instinct of self-abandonment. Her whole life was an act of faith, yet for a nature such as hers it required a special struggle to accept human intervention and give direct obedience to man because she believed he could convey the will of God. But having once yielded, she yielded utterly and with absolute reliance. Then, as ever, no middle course was possible; she could break but she could not bend, and thenceforward de Sales was her director with the most complete power over her, both regarding the office as a special ordinance of God.

The work of St. Francis as the guide of souls is not easy to realize amid the widely different traditions of a later age. Religion in the seventeenth century was continually and almost incurably sensational, but violent awakenings were apt to be ephemeral in result, and the difficulty of imparting any stability to a penitence that was the result of emotion rather than a real movement of conscience, was not met more successfully by rigid severity than by excessive tolerance. De Sales came nearer than any one else to discovering the secret whereby men might be bound to Christ. "Tout par amour, rien par force," was his

constant cry. "Jesus Himself stands at the door and knocks, He does not push it violently open, He does not despair because it remains closed, He is patient because He loves." * Patience was at the foundation of his method, but his patience and his love should not be confounded with weakness. "He had the eyes of a lynx in judging character," says his contemporary, de Camus; † and la Mère Angélique wrote with some indignation, "To me he never seemed by any means soft or gentle, though he is often said to have been so."

It must be admitted that there was no excessive softness in la Mère Angélique, and she would have been likely to resent it in another, for to her view sin was so terrible that a man of true holiness must abhor the thought of it, and if he concealed his loathing, it could only be out of the pity that is closely related to contempt. "Most people misunderstood him," she says, with a latent suggestion of pride in her own enlightenment, "for he only revealed himself to those who really trusted him and whom he saw would follow what he said. I had not till then met with such firmness as he displayed."

Nevertheless, though we must accept the testimony of la Mère Angélique that de Sales was not one of the easy-going confessors who were dear to the heart of softly nurtured penitents, and had undermined and distorted one of the strongest means of influence known to the Church, he did exercise his authority on the side of prudence and moderation when he came to full knowledge of the rule the young Abbess had imposed upon herself. In the first instance, he came to Maubuisson only for a confirmation, returning to Paris the same day, but, as we have seen, his personality made so deep an impression upon Angélique that she wrote to him beseeching him to come again, and opening to him with the fullest confidence the grief that caused her such misgivings—namely, that she could not reconcile her intelligence to the leading of any single individual priest with whom she had thus far come in contact.

By this avowal she exonerated the confessors of Port-Royal

* De Camus, "Esprit de S. François de Sales." † Ibid.

from any charge of goading her on to practise the extreme methods of self-discipline, and these habits of hers were little by little forbidden or modified by de Sales. Perhaps herein lay the proof of his firmness; for Angélique, far more afraid of her conscience than of bodily suffering, may have been tenacious of every one of the details of self-torture which seem, to her fervent but rather unbalanced state of mind, to have represented weights to be set in the scales against the sins of which she had such vivid realization. It was his part to give her a new law, to teach her that the force of will needed to support these outward austerities might be better employed in controlling fresh tendency towards sin. He recognized that she had received a special call, and that she must fit herself to fulfil it, but his discernment revealed to him at once the weak spot in her dealings with herself, the absence of simplicity, and of the hopefulness which, logically, is not separable from faith. Strong in his own sense of the enveloping love of Christ, he stretched out his hands to her and drew her from the uncertain ground where she had stumbled and bruised herself to a foothold of humble confidence as stable as his own.

There may have been moments when la Mère Angélique—whose desire for submission had hitherto been purely theoretical—rebelled against control that was so antagonistic to her natural instincts. She missed the satisfaction of her penances, and found it hard to believe in any reality of advance when the visible and external proofs were not permitted her; nevertheless, her final verdict on him declares how truly the two had understood each other: "He would forgive nothing to those who really desired to be led to the truth. To consider the rules he drew up for his community is to realize that they were required in very truth to die to themselves and be crucified with Christ." It should be remembered that she wrote thus of him looking back after years of experience, that those years had been spent in the practice of rigorous austerity, and that during many of them the iron influence of Saint-Cyran had been graven on every character within the walls of Port-Royal. If, therefore, any one of those

who came closely in contact with him was likely to regard de Sales as too mild and gentle towards his penitents, it would be la Mère Angélique. As she exonerates him, the charge can have no ground.

In fact, what the ignorant mistook for softness was that quality of patience most necessary for wise direction; de Sales could separate the babes from the mature, and his strong meat was only for the latter. "Certes, je vous connois bien," he wrote to la Mère Angélique, "et que vous avez toujours dans le cœur une invariable résolution de vivre toute à Dieu." * It was when he had that knowledge that he became as unshrinking as Saint-Cyran himself in his demands. For François de Sales is, by every tradition and every testimony, a most convincing instance of the possibility of losing self in Christ, here in this present life. There was a divine quality in his love that was recognized wherever he went, and his utterances were not tainted by that exaggeration and sensationalism which clokes so much that is lovely among the mediæval saints. He said that if he felt there was in him a single link of love that was not of God, in God, and for God, he should break from it instantly, for he would rather not be living than not live wholly for God.† It would be hard for a man on whose life the strong rays of continual publicity were beating to give a pledge of more heart-searching sincerity than this, but for all its daring it was justified. He was the servant of the Lord, and, believing himself to be so, he sought the definite orders of his Master with absolute simplicity. Thus no suspicion of the human element disturbed the confidence of those whom he directed. He did not fear to delay his answers because complete certainty of the Divine message had not yet been granted. "I do not yet say no," he wrote to Mme. de Chantal over some point of difficulty, "but I say that thus far I have found nothing to teach me to say yes. And you must know that I have never been more completely devoid of personal inclination in my search for the will of God—nevertheless the 'yes' would not stay with me, and the 'no'

* "Lettres de S. François de Sales," vol. iii. No. 47, December 16, 1619.

† Bougaud, "Vie de S. Jeanne de Chantal," p. 117.

returned repeatedly." * "No" was the final answer to that questioning of hers, and though obedience crossed her will, she had the full assurance that she was not yielding to any human whim. And what had been true of a practical matter was not less so in questions purely spiritual. Both alike were lifted before the throne of God for judgment. Among the Carmelite nuns very high doctrine was taught regarding prayer and meditation. ntellect and imagination were not needed, said they, of itself the soul would be moved to adoring contemplation of the Life of Christ. De Sales was too practical not to see the danger of the theory to a beginner in the way of prayer, too gentle to refute it altogether. "Perhaps they, being already high on the mountain of perfection, may not require such helps," he wrote to Mme. de Chantal; "but for such as we, who, though anxious to rise, are still in the valley, it is best to employ every power we possess." †

Mme. de Chantal, like la Mère Angélique, was eager in aspiration; she longed to soar to heights for which he knew she was unprepared. Many a woman—urged on, as often happened, by reckless priests who desired to draw personal reputation from the extreme piety of their flock—grew giddy in the rarefied atmosphere of half-comprehended mysticism, and never regained her mental balance. Angélique Arnauld, climbing alone and finding her own way, had for a time been dazed and blinded, though her intellect and will were strong, and Mme. de Chantal was fortunate in that she had guidance to make her ascent less rapid but more sure. It may be, however, that it was well for the Abbess of Port-Royal that she should have known the need before, in its truest perfection, it was supplied to her. For the history of Port-Royal is the field where the question of spiritual guidance has been fought most hotly, where proofs of its infinite possibilities for evil or for good have been the missiles hurled promiscuously by reckless combatants. From the recess of memory it was well for her that she could summon, when unseemly controversy

* August 6, 1606.

† Quoted Bougaud, "Vie de S. Jeanne de Chantal."

threatened to disturb her peace, the image of the gentle saint, with his words of temperate wisdom and the strange realistic imagery that was inseparably his own. "Demeurons, ma chère fille, encore un peu de temps ici en ces basses vallées, baisons encore un peu les pieds du Sauveur ; il nous appellera, quand il lui plaira, à sa sainte bouche." *

* April, 1608.

CHAPTER II

THE RULE OF S. BENEDICT

The spiritual development of Angélique was quite independent of external events, and it is therefore possible to trace the one without detailed consideration of the other. The striking incidents of her career—and they are sufficiently numerous—are the obvious result of her strength of character; the strength itself was independent of outward circumstances. As we follow her along her difficult path of life, it becomes evident that in whatever circumstances she had been bred, whether for the Court, or for the market-place, or for labour in the fields, the personality of Angélique Arnauld must have asserted itself, fascinating all with whom she came in contact, and moulding them to conformity with her own desires and ideals.

This power of personal domination was inherited from her father. He possessed it in a marked degree, and ruled his family and associates with a rod of iron. If, in the childhood of Angélique Arnauld, he detected a reproduction of himself in her, he would have been likely to welcome the signals of it, not dreaming that in years to come he was destined to be confronted, combated, and finally conquered by his own daughter. Yet, in fact, the two being what they were, the battle was inevitable. Arnauld realized that his daughter had more strength both of character and intellect than the majority of her sex, but while he was ready to glory in the fact of her peculiar qualities, he refused, with an inconsequent blindness that is not uncommon, to recognize that she would not content herself in any environment merely because it contented other women, but would claim to judge for herself

and master her own fate so soon as her eyes were opened to the possibility of independent vision. The longing to break free from the yoke he had so unjustly imposed on her, and snatch the full measure of delight that life can give to passionate natures such as hers, was no more than an animal instinct, and the tradition of filial duty and of personal deference to her father were sufficient to defeat its promptings, if not to silence them. But the idea that had obtained possession of her mind in the convent chapel was a very different matter; its most sensational result was not immediate, but in her secret heart she must have known from the first, even while she feared to acknowledge it, the desperate measure which any attempt at consistency of conduct would demand of her.

These forebodings added force to the self-contempt (engendered by her new-found contrition), till she grew assured of the expediency of leaving Port-Royal to seek refuge in some convent where she might enter as a novice and give herself to prayer and penitence undistracted by anxiety; and the idea was the theme of much solitary musing before and after Easter. But at Pentecost another Capuchin friar * descended on Port-Royal, and Angélique in great disturbance of spirit confided to him her doubts of her fitness to remain in authority over the community. He had come with a preconceived idea of her, of the work she was likely to undertake in the full view of the world, and the credit it promised to reflect on her directors; he was, therefore, excessively angry at her suggestion of hiding, and threatened to report it at once to M. Arnauld unless she would bind herself to abandon the design. Angélique—unnerved by bodily mortifications and mental suffering—could not face the idea of her father's indignation, and promptly capitulated, promising whatever was demanded of her, though possibly with inward reservations. But the fiery priest, though opposed to the very suggestion of flight, was eager for reform, and forthwith preached a violent sermon on the subject, which greatly alarmed most of the nuns, though it seems to have suggested new ideas to a few minds that were more ardent or less

* Père Bernard.

balanced than the rest. And having delivered himself of his opinions, he went upon his way, leaving Angélique a little more anxious and unhappy than he found her.

It was plain, however, that the haven of refuge that she craved was not—at least for the time being—to be vouchsafed to her, and with every week her dread of the alternative course was augmented. It must be remembered that M. Arnauld did not confine either his control or his benefits to the person of his daughter. He appears to have regarded the whole community as under his protection; he watched over the legal and architectural concerns of the convent, and supplied the deficiencies of their revenue out of his own pocket. All this gave him—as he, doubtless, intended that it should—a very real command over all that took place there, and seemed to reduce the value of his daughter's authority and independence to merely nominal dimensions.

The infinite difficulty of Angélique's position is obvious. In the autumn of that eventful year (1608) she paid one of her periodical visits to her family. (It was, in fact, her last, though neither she nor they foresaw it would be so.) Her mind was full of anxious calculations. She discerned, with a clearness that tortured her, the hollowness of religious life as it had been regarded at Port-Royal, and the miserable compromise betwixt open perjury and even nominal obedience which she and her sisters were continually displaying before the eyes of the world by the practice of their daily life. Nor did her vision lose any of its clearness when she turned to her father. She knew him to be resolute and self-opinionated, and she could foretell the measure of his anger and impatience at the merest hint that existing conditions on which he had set the seal of his approval were susceptible to criticism. In this she judged truly; he became violent when she ventured to suggest the reflections of which her mind was full. Her only point of miscalculation had reference to herself; she knew her father's strength, but her own was still an unknown quantity. She returned to Port-Royal in the middle of October with a very heavy heart, having accomplished nothing, and only increased her apprehensions.

But it was necessary that the new light that had come upon her should affect not only her judgment of herself but her view of the motives and actions of others. Formerly she had been conscious only of a dull resentment against her father for having chained her to a convent life without reference to her temperament. That reason for resentment vanished, but its place was taken by one of far deeper import. In and through the Catholic Church she found her hope and inspiration; she accepted its traditions and authority absolutely, holding them sacred, and therefore she woke with a shock of dismay to full realization that the trick which had secured Port-Royal for her and S. Cyr for her sister Agnès had evaded not the law of an earthly tribunal but that of the Church itself. It was inevitable that condemnation of the deed should shake her faith in the doer. M. Marion's responsibility was not any palliation of her father's fault, and the remembrance that the guilt was shared, served only to break down the canon of filial respect and duty more irrevocably.

A patriarchal tradition had been maintained in the Arnauld family; the will of the head was never questioned, obedience might be given unwillingly, but the method of government was despotic, and it required nothing less than a reconstruction of the very foundations of thought and opinion for a son or a daughter of M. Arnauld to plan defiance. Angélique's first impulse was to regard his opposition to her dreams of reform as final.* He thought they savoured of hypocrisy, and attributed them to the influence of the Capuchin friars who had been appearing at Port-Royal. To break the spell, he applied to the Father-General to send a priest to preach in the chapel at the festival of All Saints. The intervening fortnight was spent by Angélique in great distress of spirit. The conditions of her whole life hitherto had pointed to one path (and one that had often proved steep and uninviting) as the way of duty and of righteousness. That path still stretched before her; but her confidence in its direction was shattered, and she saw another, diverging widely from it, which every instinct told her was the only one whereon she might press forward with

* Guilbert, "Mem. de Port-Royal," vol. i. part i. p. 326.

the security that at the end her true goal awaited her. Yet spiritual discernment was newly come to her, and filial respect and duty had hitherto appeared as the foundation-stone of the whole edifice of virtue. When we realize how curiously solitary she was, surrounded by women who were but little older in years than herself, and not apparently distinguished for wisdom, and by monks to whose exhortations she listened with feverish eagerness, but in whom she had no personal confidence; when we admit the clearness of her own view on the one hand and her awe of her father's displeasure on the other, it seems as if the mental torture of the situation could hardly be exaggerated.

On the eve of All Saints she was still uncertain, still in agony. The preacher at the festival had been assigned to them at her father's instance, and she could listen to him without the misgivings that were becoming such a hindrance to her devotions and resolutions. She liked listening to sermons, and the distraction to her thoughts was specially welcome at that moment. Even here, however, the old difficulty lay in wait. M. Arnauld chose the preacher, but he omitted to choose the text, and that which fell on his daughter's ears as she sat expectant in her choir-stall seemed to be specially selected to intensify the disquiet of her conscience. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake," read the priest. The familiar words do not often have practical application, but nothing could be more definite than their relation to Angélique's position at that moment. Yet she did not take them to herself as she had taken the sermon of the Capuchin six months earlier. She seems to have steeled herself against the summons even while it was ringing in her ears. There was a woman named Marie Baron at Port-Royal (she afterwards became a lay sister, but was then merely a servant) who was deeply attached to Angélique, and watched her narrowly. In the evening of the festival she approached her, and ventured to suggest that the text of the morning's sermon was the call of God to the Mother-Abbess. Angélique was indignant at her presumption, and rebuked her sharply, being, no doubt, the more annoyed because the woman had only echoed the voice of her own

conscience. "Nevertheless," says she, with that convincing frankness which distinguishes her "Relation," "this saying sank into my heart, and the mercy of God made use of it in such wise as to make me reflect deeply that I must obey Him rather than my father."

That was, indeed, the conclusion of the whole matter. The Mother-Abbess of the convent of Port-Royal had taken certain vows solemnly as before God. Custom bade her discriminate, held her bound to celibacy, to pay stricter regard to religious observances than her sisters in the world, to maintain a semblance of prudent living and decorum. But to the true meaning of poverty, chastity, and obedience, of the Rule of S. Benedict and the obligation to maintain it, custom paid no heed whatever. Yet in the terms of her vow there had been no suggestion of mental reservation, and to Angélique it was evident that if she was validly bound to celibacy, she was equally bound to the rest of her solemn undertaking. But M. Arnauld, while he would have been aghast at a whisper that she was free to marry, was otherwise emphatically on the side of Custom.

The question was therefore very definite, there was no subtlety about it. Her duty to God, as she most clearly understood it, clashed with her duty to her father, and she must choose. It is significant of the depth of her character that she was not hurried in action. She realized that God intended that she should suffer persecution, that she must accept it; but she did not snatch at it in a fervour of misguided enthusiasm as many women would have done. She admitted to herself that her father was in the wrong, that where she was concerned he had erred greatly, and the admission could hardly fail to bring a measure of resentment in its train, but she did not proceed at once to hurl defiance at him. Her proceedings at this time, in fact, were distinguished by a wisdom far beyond her years; but, though she was granted a right judgment, she suffered intensely from uncertainty as to the best method of converting others to her own opinions, for even she could not reform her convent against the will of the nuns.

The Prioress, la Mère du Pont, who had stood to her in the relation of gouvernante, showed no inclination to alter the even tenor of her ways at the suggestion of any one, whether monk or priest. She was, moreover, such a virtuous woman and so much respected that Angélique may have been tempted to wish that her excellence was less obvious, for there seemed no vulnerable spot in her armour of reputation, and she had naturally much influence with the nuns over whom she had maintained a peaceable and unassuming rule for many years. It is inexplicable, unless we admit that special grace was given her for her work, that Angélique, a girl of seventeen, thus confronted with a difficulty of the most daunting description, should have met it in the deepest way that can be conceived, as by a natural instinct. A great spiritual convulsion such as she had passed through is apt to strain both patience and charity, and to make judgment of others at least as severe as judgment of self. But Angélique, though admittedly unbalanced on many points by the new revelation, saw that outward attack was useless, and began by the only method of the true reformer, that of personal purification. She did not insist on a new régime of prayer and fasting in the convent, but she denied herself every possibility of physical enjoyment, and she prayed almost ceaselessly that light might be given to herself and others. She looked back over the sins and follies that darkened her record since she was professed, seeing them as hitherto she had not seen them; and, recognizing that the past was a hindrance to that which she desired for the future, she made a general confession in Advent to the priest whom her father had sent at the Festival of All Saints. In this she was followed by a few of the nuns, and these few were ready to support her in all she did, but they were a small minority, and the situation was not hopeful.

When the new year (1609) dawned upon her, she knew that before its close some decisive development must come; yet, though suspense was torture, she dared not hasten the climax, and waited silently. It was inevitable that her health should suffer. In old days when she was straining against her chains she had

fallen dangerously ill, and her illness had withheld her from a rebellious outbreak; and now once more, under far different conditions, the weakness of the body came to her aid, for every day that the community which she was supposed to govern continued in open disobedience to their vows increased the weight upon her spirit.

The first vow of the religious is that of poverty, and the nuns of Port-Royal had each their chest of treasures, while some had still their own estates. The second Capuchin had assured them in burning words that they were guilty of simony and many other deadly sins, but they had been insulted rather than conscience-stricken, and Angélique, contemplating their placid contentment, saw little hope of moving them. The result was that she added much weeping to her self-imposed rule of hardship, and la Mère du Pont, who loved her dearly, was much troubled over her melancholy condition. At length a day came when the good duenna could bear it no longer, and she and another sister waylaid their Mother-Abbess unexpectedly, and, leading her into a vacant cell where they could talk at ease, implored her to tell them the cause of her suffering. It seems probable that they had some inkling of it, and had already agreed on the course they would pursue, but Angélique—to whom life was apt to come sensationally—believed that her statement of her grief performed a miracle in their hearts. By whatever means, it is certain that her first desire was accomplished; la Mère du Pont declared that they would sacrifice anything if she would console herself; and forthwith a day was appointed (the Feast of S. Benedict himself, which chanced very appositely to be imminent), and by their own free will and consent the nuns of Port-Royal renounced all personal claim to any property, and brought their possessions to the Mother-Abbess, that all might be held in common. The instinct of renunciation was so much in the air that one among them,* who had long been deaf and dumb, and to whom their purpose had not been explained, joined in the general act of sacrifice.

* Anne Marie Johannet.

Only one held aloof. She was the veteran of Port-Royal, la Sœur Morel, and it was little wonder if she distrusted the vagaries of the Girl-Abbess. The wave of opinion, it is true, so far infected her that she brought the treasures of her cell and added them to the collection that now belonged to the abbey, but all her life she had had one great and satisfying joy, a little garden belonging to her individually, which was her interest and delight as the seasons changed, and she would not resign it. Angélique desired only voluntary obedience, but she could not regard the vow of poverty as fulfilled at Port-Royal while la Sœur Morel retained her little garden. Remonstrance was far worse than useless, it was attempted by the Capuchins, and by the nuns (fortified by the instinct of self-righteousness their own recent sacrifice induced), but the merest suggestion of her obligation to surrender roused la Sœur Morel to a transport of fury. Angélique waited, and did not interfere; both wisdom and faith whispered that patience would serve her more than effort, yet to her ardent temperament the practice of patience meant the truest self-renunciation.

And throughout her history the practice of this particular virtue seems always to have brought its due reward. In this instance it came speedily. Both monks and nuns soon wearied of their attempt to stir la Sœur Morel, and when they had all desisted and her possession was left to her undisputed, the grace that Angélique prayed for was suddenly accorded, and one morning the Mother-Abbess received a packet containing the key that represented the old nun's victory over the powers of darkness. Thenceforward the community was in truth a community, and the vow of poverty no longer nominal. Angélique had won the first outpost, and had the prestige of victory to aid her in advance.

The story of her conquest over her sisters is more feminine, more sentimental, than most of the incidents of her career. In general outline at least there is something repellent in the directness with which that career develops, in spite of obstacles and hindrances, as if her strength and energy were beyond attainment to ordinary human beings; and it is well that at the outset we are given a picture that shows her ruthlessness to be the ruthlessness

of love. The record of fact suggests that when her whole soul was concentrated on one end she was often hard in her exactions from others. She was too apt to assume that the fortitude of others would be equal to her own,* and many a humble nun may have been crushed in body and spirit by the iron rule which, in those early days, she regarded as the rule of righteousness. Yet here and there we get a sidelight that displays the personal devotion she inspired, and we know that there must have been in her a vein of tenderness,† claiming the love of those about her, and inspiring the weak to veil their weakness, lest they might disappoint her.

There is no means of judging whether those who had been inspired to renunciation ever repented their generous impulse. Their evasion of the vow had not previously disturbed their consciences, therefore they had not a new acquisition of peace to compensate them, and it is possible that an occasional regret over some treasure, priceless to its owner yet valueless to the community, may have alloyed their enthusiasm for reform. Angélique gave a new proof of wisdom by advancing rapidly when she had made her first decisive movement. She had attempted to reform herself before imposing reform upon her nuns, and, continuing on the same principle, she made no declaration of her purpose to the outward world till the conditions of life within the convent walls had undergone a signal alteration. But with the first point of the religious vow irrevocably established, she was obliged to face a far more tragic difficulty that from the first had loomed before her.

The nuns of Port-Royal were Benedictines, they were a cloistered order, bound to remain within their convent precincts unless provided with a special indulgence from their superior, and bound, moreover, not to admit any layman further than the parlour, or to converse with them except from behind the grille. This rule, at Port-Royal and elsewhere, had been entirely ignored,

* "Sa grande maxime etait que la Pauvreté ne meriteroit pas ce nom si elle ne donnait aucune occasion de souffrir" (Clemencet, "Hist. de Port-Royal," vol. i. p. 48).

† See especially "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," vol. i. No. 94.

but its disuse might justly be held accountable for the appalling disorder that prevailed in many French abbeys and was a scandal and a disgrace to the very name of Christianity. Possibly Angélique would have found it easier to enforce if Port-Royal had been the scene of any gross abuse of liberty, but the mildly virtuous character borne by her nuns deprived her of the obvious pretext that other convents would have afforded only too readily, and, moreover, the most flagrant offender in the matter of outside intrusion was her own father, that very discreet and prudent magistrate, M. Antoine Arnauld.

The fact of his frequent presence in the convent was very well known and generally approved. Angélique knew that the step she contemplated would find no favour even among the serious-minded, but would be regarded as the feather-brained escapade of an ignorant and foolish girl. The Rule of S. Benedict and the remembrance of her vows were not to be evaded, however. Could she have escaped elsewhere and left Port-Royal to prolong its rule of compromise, she would have grasped at the opportunity with eagerness; but that was not permitted her, and therefore she faced a situation which chilled her blood with apprehension, and refused to be influenced by the point of view of the world.

The profession of a novice took place after Easter that year, and brought a crowd of acquaintances to the convent, but the Mother-Abbess did not accord them the welcome to which they were accustomed; they were entertained in the garden, and were denied admittance to the refectory. The fine company were discontented, and there were murmurs that when M. Arnauld came these new-fangled scruples would assuredly be set aside. When they were gone, Angélique realized that she had thrown down the gauntlet, and she awaited the issue with a natural shrinking that in no wise weakened her determination. A desire to avoid publicity and the infliction of unnecessary pain prompted her to warn Mme. Arnauld that she intended to enforce the rule of the cloister. But this measure had no result; she did not succeed in making any impression whatever. To the mind of that worthy lady, Angélique still, very naturally, appeared as the

child she had been a very few years ago, and it seemed very necessary that her mother should be able to descend on her whenever she chose, if only to see that she was behaving herself. In short, the idea of maintaining the cloister seemed too absurd to be worthy of a serious thought. So the wheel came full circle, and in the face of society, the Mother-Abbess of Port-Royal was summoned to outrage the deepest principles of filial duty.

In September, M. Arnauld was free from his onerous Parliamentary duties. Nearly a year had passed since Angélique had paid her last visit to her home, and she had then shown a tendency to depart from the straight and well-directed course he had laid down for her to walk in. He had ascribed the suggestion of rebellion to the impulsiveness of youth, which time might dissipate, but of late unpleasant rumours had reached him, and he sent word to her that she might prepare to receive a visit from him on the last Friday * of the month.

Angélique did not warn many of her sisters of his coming; to her it was a terribly serious matter, and she did not desire discussion of it. She watched through the preceding night in the chapel, praying for the strength she sorely needed, and a chosen few were with her who sympathized in the great venture of faith she was about to make.

M. Arnauld contemplated dining at Port-Royal, as he had often done before, and his carriage rumbled up just when the nuns had gone to the refectory, between 10 and 11 a.m. With him came Mme. Arnauld, his eldest daughter Catherine Le Maistre, a younger one, Mlle. Anne, and his eldest son, so well known as Arnauld d'Andilly.

M. Arnauld alighted and knocked at the convent door. Angélique came straight from the chapel, and stood at the wicket entrance key in hand. There is no record of that interview—she was probably too much distressed to take account of the exact words that passed, and the remembrance could not have been a pleasant one to M. Arnauld—but it was not necessary to be within ear-shot to grasp her meaning; the blow that had long

* September 27, 1609.

threatened, but whose mere possibility had seemed too outrageous to be seriously considered, had fallen at last; the convent door was closed against M. Arnauld, and his daughter set him at defiance. Before long the privacy of that first interview was violated, and Angélique implored her father to turn into the parlour by the entrance that she might talk to him through the grille. But he was overpowered by rage, and forgot that his own dignity as well as hers suffered from publicity. If we try to reconstruct the picture of the scene that followed,* the really tragic position of the two chief actors is obscured by the absurd banalities of supernumeraries. M. Arnauld is speedily joined by his wife and son, and his stern words of command lose weight because the shrill expostulations of Mme. Arnauld and the unmeasured abuse of d'Andilly are joined to them.

Angélique also is not allowed to remain as a solitary defender of her vow. Her nuns speedily gathered behind her, and, as she had feared, they were not agreed in supporting her; there was a general clamour, above which rang the voice of la Sœur Morel herself, echoing the sentiment of the majority: "It is a shame not to open to M. Arnauld!" Catherine and Anne listened and watched in a silence that must have been agonizing in its demand on self-control. They both loved Angélique passionately, and knew that no pain she inflicted could equal that which she must suffer. Within the convent, two other of her sisters, Agnès and Marie-Claire, were also witnesses of a scene that was in fact the crisis and turning-point in the life of the whole family. To them Angélique was Mother-Abbess as well as sister, for both had been placed under her care, and even while they trembled at an audacity that seemed superhuman, they could not question her power of judgment. And in a flash of thought it was revealed to M. Arnauld that not only would these two assuredly be corrupted by their elder sister's influence, but that also by the act of claiming them he might force an entrance into the building which he seems to have regarded as his own. In demanding the surrender of his younger daughters he was within his rights, as neither were

* Guilbert, "Mem. de Port-Royal," vol. i. part i. p. 348.

professed nuns, and Angélique knew it, but she knew also that a door opening for their exit would infallibly afford entrance to M. Arnauld, and she held desperately to the necessity of his exclusion as a law to be established by that day of torture, and never again to be infringed. She was fortunate in possessing self-command that was proof even against the agitation she was suffering ; there were a few among her nuns, moreover, on whom she could absolutely rely, and M. Arnauld's summons to his younger daughters had hardly passed his lips before she had imagined a method of defeating his scheme and given her directions to one whom she could trust.

He waited, expecting that the door would open and the two young girls be restored to their mother, while he, by a quick and decisive movement, passed the barrier and stood face to face with the rebel. But while he waited, Agnès and Marie-Claire, passing out of the side door of the chapel (which was swiftly locked behind them) appeared in the courtyard, and, with a fresh access of indignation, M. Arnauld saw that his daughter had outwitted him. Turning away, he called to the grooms to harness his carriage that he might leave Port-Royal behind him as speedily as possible.

Yet at the last he had a moment of relenting—one of those moments that turn the scale of destiny, and which must, to Angélique, have appeared as another of the miracles of grace that came in answer to her passionate prayers. She had won her victory ; but if he had driven away without allowing her a word of explanation, turning his back on her for ever, the victory would have been won at the cost of a broken heart. For there was undoubtedly a strong and peculiar bond between Angélique and her father ; the strength that made her defiance possible was a part of her nature that she derived from him, and his claim on her obedience was the more insistent because he realized their close kinship in temperament. In fact, his was the only personal authority to which she ever deferred. In so far as Saint-Cyran ruled her, it was by the authority of the Church, and to the end of her life she was always apt to criticize her directors, firmly

believing that their weaknesses might turn to good, but not attempting to veil from herself the fact of the weakness. But if M. Arnauld had not placed himself in direct antagonism to the Church, she would not have ventured to recognize his failings, and when the moment for defiance came, the very strength of her case against him made her task heavier.

He was the loser in their contest, and he had lost in full view of his family and of a dozen chattering women, who had left their work to cluster in the courtyard and watch. No circumstance that could add to his discomfiture was spared, and it is a striking testimony to the depth of his nature that at the last moment he did yield to the entreaty of his daughter, and enter that outer parlour in which he had declared he would not set foot a few moments before. She stood behind the grille, ready to stem the torrent of his wrath with expressions of her own bitter sorrow when he came, but she found that his wrath had died. He was reproachful, but with the gentle reproach of disappointed love, not to be wondered at when this was to be their final parting and its finality was the deliberate choice of the child he had most cherished. A Frenchman, even though he may be naturally reserved, can appeal to the emotions as his northern neighbours cannot. Angélique found herself face to face with the sharpest test that had yet been applied to her resolution. One may rest assured that she would in any case have had strength to withstand it, but for the third time weakness of body came to her assistance. We know that she had watched all night—probably, as in those days she was prone to extravagances of mortification, she had also fasted—and now her strength failed her, and she fainted. Angélique was not the type of woman who faints on small provocation, and nothing could have been more opportune and at the same time more dramatic than the weakness on this occasion. Anxiety stifled resentment in M. Arnauld's breast, and the divisions amid the nuns were healed in a common consternation. Nor did her revival lessen the effect, for she was so worn out that it was evident she could bear no further tax upon her strength. A couch was brought whereon she might lie

behind the grille, and her father, utterly disarmed, found himself discussing the difficulty of the position with her, as if she had given him no cause for indignation. It is to the honour of both that they were able to agree upon the terms of treaty—he to resign himself to never passing the limits of the cloister, she to his obtaining formal permission from the Father-General to come and go as he would in the garden and outer precincts.

The momentous scene closes with a touch of comedy, but though the absurdity of the incident is out of place, it is in itself infinitely characteristic both of Angélique herself and of the disastrous conditions of that very religious life she was defending. She had gone through her struggle alone, braving the danger of downfall and humiliation without support, representing in her own person the cause which she defended. But when the strength of her courage had been aided by physical weakness to conquer her father's heart, another figure suddenly presented itself. De Vauclair, confessor, director, and general exhorter to the monastery, who had with wise discretion taken no part in the day's proceedings, considered that its satisfactory conclusion would be incomplete if he was entirely ignored. Therefore he came to M. Arnauld, beamingly complacent, avowing that the revolt of Angélique was by his prompting, and that he was ready then and there to justify her.

He miscalculated the situation, however, the real key to which was the deep affection of M. Arnauld for his daughter, not a miraculous conversion to her view of the religious life. The wrath of M. Arnauld and of his son was smouldering still, and the intrusion of de Vauclair caused it to burst into flame; with the result that the unlucky monk was the recipient of such a torrent of contemptuous abuse as to make it evident that, for him at least, there would be no hope of reconciliation with the financial patron of Port-Royal. Angélique, relating the day's events, touches the incident with guileless candour. Even in his passion it would seem that M. Arnauld had been able to take note of the youth of de Vauclair, and thereupon applied to the Father-General for his withdrawal, "which I did not regret,"

says Angélique, "for it was plain to me that though he had the fear of God, he had not much that we were needing, and it was time he went." Evidently she did not attribute any part either of her strength or her success to the help she had received from the convent confessor; she knew that she had kept the gate alone, and had kept it, not against her father only, but against the vast weight of tradition that had been the growth of generations. For it was an accepted custom at that time that when the daughters of the house were too numerous to be suitably dowered, some of them should be nuns; and if Angélique's theory of the strict maintenance of the cloister and the practices of mortification were to spread (as, in fact, it did rapidly), other considerations connected with individual temperament would arise, and complicate situations that had hitherto been simple. Therefore the whole force of parental authority was against her; her rebellion—the "journée de guichet," as it was called—became a theme for gossip, and she herself the object of vigorous censure. Those who condemned her most, however, could not deny that she had brought a test case to trial, and had won.

It had been a bold measure for a girl of eighteen, but it had not been taken ignorantly or inconsiderately. The chief strength of her position lay in her knowledge of its danger. She was no fantastic visionary ready to trust all who would seem to share her dreams of unreal sanctification, but a reformer with the gift of intuition and the reserve which is the only safeguard against hypocrisy. She knew, even while she was raising her defences against the intrusion of the world into the convent, that the real danger of the religious life lay less in the distractions of the world outside than in the demoralization of the world within. To her view, indeed, it seemed that her own peace and that of her sisters was threatened most by the monks who had a definite claim upon them—the monks of their own Order of S. Bernard, against whom her rule forbade her to close the convent door. It was no passing dread, no whim born of a girlish prejudice; we find it expressed again and again in different connections, and under differing circumstances, and it prompted her finally to place her community

under episcopal jurisdiction—a step which, though it may have paved the way for persecution, was taken with a motive of absolute purity.

It is hardly possible to dwell on the conditions of monastic life at that period. The vices of Court and camp are recorded in countless memoirs with superabundant detail, and it is evident that for the most part so-called religious life shared in the general pollution. Thus Rules that had been made by saints for those whom they pictured as following in their footsteps gave license for the worst depravity in men who took their nominal vows because they were the only possible excuse for indolent self-pleasing in an age of rough activity. Some of the monks, indeed, were men of culture, but these were, probably, the most dangerous. It should be remembered that the founder of an Order followed by nuns as well as monks, invariably put the former under the spiritual charge of the latter. If the high standard of mediæval sanctity had been maintained the arrangement might have answered. S. Benedict's well-known description of the qualities that were originally deemed necessary for the religious life, for instance, exonerates these venerable founders of wilful rashness in the framing of their constitution. "A monk ought not to wish to be called holy before he is so," says the saint, "but first to become what may truly be so called. Daily to fulfil in his actions the commandments of God. To love chastity; to hate no one; to have no jealousy, no envy; to dislike discord and to flee pride. To reverence his elders, to love his juniors, and in the love of Christ to pray for his enemies. To be at peace before the setting of the sun with those with whom he may have disagreed. And never to despair of God's mercy." *

There would have been no danger in receiving one who fulfilled these requirements wherever he might ask admittance, and if the devoted life had been even cherished as an ideal by those who wore the garb of the monastic orders, Angélique's scathing criticisms would never have been called for. But in

* See for admirable study of S. Benedict, Hodgkin, "Italy and her Invaders," vol. iv. book v. ch. 16.

fact the abbeys were more generally and more radically corrupt than the convents, and even preachers of extreme doctrines, whose precepts were violent and pronounced enough to reform the world, could not be trusted in the practice of their private lives. Archange de Pembroke,* the successor of de Vauclair, warned the young Mother-Abbess of the dangers that encompassed her and her flock. "His first direction to me," she records, "and one which has been of great service to me, was not ever to permit our sisters to hold converse with a monk, not even with a Capuchin, though he might preach like an angel."

Under such circumstances it must be acknowledged that M. Arnauld was in some degree justified in his claim to exercise supervision at Port-Royal. But Angélique did not flinch from the tremendous responsibility she was assuming. When her brother d'Andilly took it upon himself to remonstrate with her, she defied him openly. "Truly it is a droll affair," she said. "They made me a nun at nine years old, when I did not wish to be one, and when my age made it almost impossible that I should so wish. And now that the wish is come, they would force me to damn myself by neglecting my Rule. I am not responsible. They did not ask my leave in making a nun of me, and I shall not ask theirs to live as a nun and seek salvation. They threaten to cast me off. I would fain be somewhere where I was divided from all my kindred and utterly unknown. Jesus Christ is father and mother and brother. If they disown me, I shall say, 'Pater meus et Mater mea dereliquerunt me Dominus autem assumpsit me.' There are none to whom God gives such special succour as to those who are rejected by their kindred for faithfulness to Him." †

It is the language of the devotee, based on a theory that made her impervious to the appeals of traditional reverence and affection, and armed her with a logic that justified her vigorous plain-speaking. She could see every argument against consigning a young girl to the life of the cloister as plainly as could M. Arnauld himself, but,

* Younger son of the Earl of Pembroke.

† "Relation : Entretiens," No. 9.

while admitting that the Rule that had been forced upon her was undoubtedly framed for purer times than those wherein she lived, she denied finally and absolutely that that admission made it a whit less binding. She had dedicated herself to the service of God, as understood and formulated by S. Benedict and S. Bernard. She had enforced the poverty that was the first necessity of all religious life, and the seclusion exacted by the founder of her Order, but she knew that a complete reconstruction of detail, almost as difficult to accomplish as had been the rearing of those outer bulwarks, still lay before her. The "journée de guichet" gave her more than outward independence. Thenceforward she took possession of her inner life, recognizing that she was responsible not to an earthly parent, whose weakness she had been forced to recognize, but to God. It was not in her nature to look back or to entertain misgivings; she believed sincerely that she had been guided by grace, and that conviction enabled her to concentrate her whole being in looking forward and seeking future opportunity to spread the light with which she herself had been endowed.

The material with which she had to deal was the old shell of monastic rule, grown rotten by long disuse. It was not a promising task, and it might have been far easier to begin afresh, but Angélique never desired to found a new Order; she was content to apply herself to the resuscitation of the old. To this she brought just the equipment that the moment craved. In girlhood, as in old age, she was possessed by a passion for reality and an entire inability to accept symbols without some knowledge of the truths they represented. She loved the Church, and was loyal to it in the deepest sense, but she died in disgrace and under censure, because she could not give obedience blindly or repudiate what her innermost being had once accepted as the truth. Thus her power of concentration was fatal to her outward peace as life went on, but in her early years it gave her the strength she needed for her task.

The true Rule of S. Benedict was not practised in any other monastery of the Order of Citeaux when Angélique set herself to

study it.* The principle of obedience was the ruling thought in it, almost every regulation being left to the discretion of the superior. The obvious drawback proceeding from the shortcomings of the superiors led S. Bernard, himself a monk of Citeaux, to fix the detail of the founder's Rule six hundred years after its institution. By so doing he infused new zeal into the Order, but in the five centuries that divided S. Bernard and la Mère Angélique there had been time for zeal to evaporate, taking obedience even to the letter with it.

We have seen what the conditions of Port-Royal were when M. Arnauld placed his daughter there. It was a pleasant place of residence, not far from Paris, and surrounded by attractive country.† It was not healthy, but the damp made the soil productive and fruit and flowers plentiful. The actual building was small and ill-designed, but it held ample accommodation for the Mother-Abbess and the dozen nuns who dwelt there. Their life was not exciting, but it was peaceful, and, when youth was over, had many attractions for persons of calm temperament. Moreover, the contrast between their innocent diversions and the practices in other convents both of their own Order and of others gave food for quiet self-complacency. They did not, it is true, accomplish anything particular in service to others, nor did they aspire to any exalted idea of sanctity; all that obedience demanded was punctual attendance at office, and that they gave, esteeming it presumptuous to seek for themselves new practices of piety not even recommended by the monks who directed them. They might have thus continued, harmless and unproductive of any special good to themselves or others, through that century of movement and reaction, if M. Marion and his son-in-law had not conceived and carried through the unlawful conspiracy that made a high-spirited and charming child the Mother-Abbess of Port-Royal. When the good nuns welcomed and petted her, they little dreamed what a firebrand she was to prove, and as the easy, lazy hours slipped by no warning whispers foreshadowed

* A. Arnauld, Dr. "L'Esprit et Conduite de Port-Royal."

† See Guilbert, "Mem. de Port-Royal" vol. ii., Appendix.

what life at Port-Royal would be when ten years should have made the child into a woman. Assuredly could they have looked into the future, not one among those gentle, empty-headed women but would have shrunk in terror and amazement from the vision.

Yet la Mère Angélique, though it was her influence and her example that wrought the change, knew herself to be merely the instrument of God, and the superhuman element in all she did is especially evident when we mark the gradual progress of the work that she—who in her youth was passionate and impulsive—was permitted to accomplish. For gradual growth is the essence of the true religious life. There may be swift conversion and vast and sweeping sacrifice of wealth and honour made in consequence. Such things as these impress the popular imagination, and may in due course bear fruit. The seventeenth century, amid diverse forms of sensationalism, produced many examples of dramatic self-surrender. "On veut pratiquer le Christianisme dans sa séverité," declared Bourdaloue, the great preacher of the age, in the pulpit of Nôtre Dame, "mais on en veut avoir l'honneur," he added sapiently. "On se retire du monde, mais on est bien aise que le monde le sache, et s'il ne le devait pas savoir, je doute qu'on eût la courage et la force de s'en retirer." *

But it is not thus that the true religious sets forth to seek the way of perfection, nor was it with any desire to attract comment or approbation from the world without, that the nuns of Port-Royal yielded themselves to accept the stern requirements of S. Bernard of Clairvaux. It is not an easy thing for a woman tenderly nurtured, and possibly physically delicate, to abide by monastic rule, and realize that thenceforward she can never escape from it. At 2 a.m., winter and summer, the nuns of Port-Royal were in their places to chant matins, and they did not go to bed again, but went on through the appointed succession of services, the Canonical Hours, the Office of the Blessed Virgin, and the frequent Office for the Dead. A certain amount of manual labour employed the time that was not spent in chapel; sometimes they had a little leisure, but this they were enjoined to

* Quoted Sainte-Beuve, "Causeries de Lundi," vol. viii.

use for meditation in their cells. The hour for recreation was of the briefest, and opportunities for speech were rare; silence, indeed, became so much a habit that a nun might vow not to speak for many weeks consecutively without exciting notice. If one had special permission from the Abbess, to approach the grille and hold intercourse with a friend from the outer world, she must have a companion at her side to prevent the possibility of confidences. The dress was of the simplest—a plain white tunic from the throat to the feet, and a black veil. All that they wore was serge, and that not of the finest; even for sheets they were not permitted any other fabric, and their bed was a thin mattress laid on three wooden trestles. Angélique encouraged no relaxation. Even conferences that she had at first held with her sisters two or three times a week on spiritual subjects were afterwards abandoned as being unnecessary to spiritual advance.*

It was well, seeing how stringent was the Rule, that a long noviciate was insisted on, and we often find that novices were sent away as unfit for the calling to which they had aspired. Nevertheless, in ten years the community grew in numbers from twelve to eighty, and was united by enthusiasm even more than by obedience, so that it seemed that Angélique had been able to infuse her own spirit into the heart of every one who came under her guidance, and hardly needed to command, because those who followed her strove with each other who should draw nearest to the high ideal she placed before herself and them.

Face to face with this astounding fact of the supreme attraction of Port-Royal, it is worth while to glance at the meaning of the theory of la Mère Angélique. For assuredly it is not pleasant to rise at two in the morning and spend the greater part of the day in a cramped bodily position, repeating Latin prayers or chanting hymns without accompaniment. At Port-Royal there was very little appeal to the emotions; the austerities of daily practice were carried into chapel, and neither ornament nor instrumental music were permitted, even to indicate a season of festival. Nor was the Mother-Abbess tolerant of excessive

* See Guilbert, "Mem. de Port-Royal," vol. ii., Appendix.

exaltation; she desired simplicity in worship as in life. Therefore the sentimentalist or the victim of religious mania could find no haven there, and to others it would seem that the Rule made too sharp demands upon endurance. Yet we know that ere long the building became overcrowded, and food itself grew scarce. The fact seems to require explanation, yet to attempt to explain is to touch upon a question which each one must answer for himself, and base all judgment of the life of Angélique Arnauld upon the answer.

'In the world there are two forms of love,' said S. Augustine, 'the love of God that means denial of self, and the love of self that means denial of God.' All other grades of love lie in between these two extremes. The religious is one who professes, if not to attain, at least to attempt continually to reach the highest point, the love of God in denial of self. All religious discipline rests on the great idea of renewing the unity betwixt God and man by sacrifice. But the world, which sees the sacrifice and not its reward, which sees the scar and not the hand that gave the wound, the world is astonished and repelled." * "Do you not know, sisters," said S. Teresa, "that the life of a religious, and of one who wishes to be numbered among the intimate friends of God, is a long martyrdom;" † and that word —bold as its use may seem—is the right one. The supreme venture of faith, as recognized by Christendom, was the acceptance of death for the sake of the unseen Christ. But if we look closely we shall see that the venture of one who, after long and deep reflection, takes the religious vow, is in no wise less tremendous. If the hope of the world were vain, monastic life would be unendurable. The world has many miseries, but it has certain joys. Monasticism can offer nothing but wearisome monotony and useless self-denial, if it could reasonably be viewed at all apart from the thought of Christ. There, and there only, is its explanation, and the first step to even superficial understanding of it is the realization that for the true religious there

* Père Chocarne Dominicaine, "Vie de Lacordaire," p. 286.

† "The Way of Perfection," ch. xiii.

can be no half measures. "Soyez-en assurée," wrote the greatest of modern monks, "rien n'est moins compatible que le bonheur du monde et le ravissement en Dieu. Plus j'étudie les gens heureux, plus je suis effrayé de leur incapacité divine." *

Those who have been permitted to aspire to a sense of the companionship of Christ must lose even a thought of sacrifice. No gift can seem costly to the giver if in the depths of his soul he is certain of so great a recompense. Once admit the fact of his certainty, and the true theory of monasticism ceases to be a mystery, the most austere of Trappists excites no wonder, and those only demand commiseration who pause to weigh the worth of what they give, and by reserving a fraction of the whole, forfeit the glorious knowledge of its acceptance.

It is by the tremendous testimony of their actual existence that the religious orders have exercised so great an influence at all periods when they have maintained their Rule in its original purity. All arguments against them cannot touch their claim to be silent witnesses of the power of the Cross as an incentive to complete self-sacrifice. Let those who will maintain that the sacrifice is useless, that the same lives spent in society or in independent labour among the needy would fulfil a greater end. The plea, so often urged, betrays a lack of comprehension, for at the root of the rule of the religious lies the belief that the life sustained in the world is of necessity a different life, and that for those to whom the call has come, true growth and power for good is unattainable if they should dare to disobey it.

The strange phenomenon of sexual love is not, in truth, a greater mystery than this. Continually we see a man and woman drawn together by a deep instinct of affinity and becoming one in marriage, and even custom cannot vulgarize the marvel of it. But we ignore this other wonder than human character exhibits—far less often but no less certainly—feigning to be incredulous of its reality. Yet it would be hard to study the story of Port-Royal and not believe that the special summons of Christ is forced upon the ears of one and another who have been hitherto content with

* Lacordaire, "Corr. inédit. ("Vie," vol. ii. p. 173).

the joys and distractions of the world. Why else did young and beautiful women step aside from a path where the sun shone on them, and, shrouding themselves in a disfiguring dress, prepare to pass the remainder of their days in a routine of prayer and penance? For thirty months the Mother-Abbess held the door open for escape, yet very few desired to pass out unless she drove them forth. For in thirty months the venture ceased to be a venture; natural desire had been so continuously denied that spiritual desire had at last soared above it. The great aspiration of the religious had ceased to be a dream, it had become life itself, and although prayer might still be difficult—might remain difficult if God so willed it—in thirty months some revelation of its true perfection had surely been vouchsafed, so that the memory of a moment's glorious knowledge flooded the soul with hope and love and longing. The saying of the great Dominican was in the heart of each Port-Royal novice when she knelt for her profession: "Quiconque arrive à connaître Dieu et à l'aimer n'a rien à désirer, rien à regretter." *

Truly their sacrifice, though it might seem but idle folly to the world, was the logical sequence of their faith. They lived in an evil age when men were forgetting God, but the love that filled their hearts called them to pray for those who were negligent of prayer themselves—"to pray and not to faint." The Christ who loved and gave Himself in love called them to imitation, and they obeyed. By their belief in the efficacy of His Sacrifice they learnt to make their own, the thought of both resting in faith and love. Here only can we find the explanation of Angélique's power to revive the Rule. No false sensationalism, no hysterical excitement, will sustain a human being through the lifetime of monotonous self-repression that the nuns of Port-Royal endured unflinchingly, and though we may not deem that the mystery is lessened by its only explanation, the most incredulous forget to mock at a delusion that demanded martyrdom.

* Lacordaire, Corr. inédit. ("Vie," vol. ii. p. 173).

CHAPTER III

THE ABBESS OF MAUBUISSON

The story of Angélique's proceedings at Port-Royal was not long in becoming public property; there was so much that was sensational in it that it gave the world something to wonder at and talk about; and, as it chanced, topics for conversation were particularly needed, for at that same period another woman, possessing also her own peculiar strength and her own especial mission, was beginning her crusade against the rule of custom, and endeavouring to teach society that amusement and wickedness were not necessarily inseparable.

At the Hôtel Rambouillet Port-Royal could not fail to be a topic of intense interest. The society that congregated there * was then in its early stage, and the element of unreality that is induced by a sustained search for novelty was not yet evident. But the Hôtel Rambouillet required topics for conversation if it was to exist at all. Mme. de Rambouillet had much in common with Angélique Arnauld, and her work for her generation (though it called men and women to reform their methods of pursuing pleasure, not to forego the pleasure itself) may be regarded as supporting that of her austere contemporary, while, in special instances, her influence on individuals seems to have prepared the way for the deeper claims of Port-Royal. The most serious period of the Hôtel Rambouillet was at its beginning.

* "L'Hôtel de Rambouillet étoit dans Paris une espèce d'Académie de beaux-esprits, de galanterie, de vertu et de science, et le rendezvous de tout ce qui étoit le plus distingué en mérite" (Saint-Simon).

Love-making and scandal-mongering were the sole occupation provided for the tongue at Court, and the first reaction tended to somewhat excessive gravity. Those were the days of Malherbe, the literary veteran, whose admiration flattered the young hostess, while his cynicism and contempt for young enthusiasm restrained real gaiety whenever he appeared. No wonder if a subject so serious and yet so exciting as the decisive action of the young Abbess of Port-Royal appealed to the conversationalists of the Chambre Bleue, and that thenceforward a half-acknowledged bond of sympathy united the supporters of both efforts at reform, in spite of their wide divergence in intent.

But Angélique herself was oblivious of what society might think of her; she did not court its applause, and cared nothing for its censure, and there was more than sufficient employment for her mind in the practical difficulties of her lot. To the day of her death, in spite of endless mortification, both self-inflicted and imposed upon her from without, Angélique Arnauld retained the deep pride that was common to her race, and, even in the fervour of self-renunciation, she betrayed its influence upon her as distinctly as if it had been her habit to take the chief place where men and women congregate, and to claim the precedence to which her natural gifts entitled her. She could and did invent strange methods to test and conquer her besetting sin, but after she had repulsed her father, she would never again appeal to him for the help he had been eager to give in financial difficulties. Her pride revolted, and, though the nuns must have suffered sharply from the change, she was inexorable. "We abode in great peace and extreme poverty," she wrote simply; "we did not lack what was necessary, but our furniture and clothes and lodging were of the humblest, and we were well content." Those early days of simplicity, when to be poor for Christ's sake was a new-found joy to an awakened soul, have a peculiar beauty about them which we miss when Port-Royal had become an established and important fact in the national life, and a centre of contention for conflicting parties in Church and State. But it is in the nature of such work that its conditions must change continually, and Angélique

was not long permitted to conduct her little flock towards the goal of perfection unmolested by outward authority.

Society showed a tendency to applaud the new organization of life at Port-Royal, for it was being taught to observe and revile the malpractices of other institutions. The society of Henri IV. and Marie de Medicis might have criticized a flagrant instance of moral laxity, but it would speedily have forgotten the incentive to criticism, and those who held spiritual authority were never forced to reconsider their obligations by the spur of public opinion. But beneath the roof of Mme. de Rambouillet priests whose lives did not dishonour their calling could mingle with the other guests, and in her circle a question of manners and morals was of too great importance to be dropped with a few flippant comments. Moreover, it was the moral delinquencies of Henri IV. that had been the primary cause of her bold venture, even as his laxity had—by intensifying the degradation of religious life in face of the Church and the world—necessitated the work of Angélique Arnauld.

The depths of vice possible to be reached under cover of religious profession was demonstrated at the convent of Maubuisson. Maubuisson was under the same rule as Port-Royal and directed by the monks of Citeaux. The scandals there under Angélique d'Estrées had steadily increased as the years passed. Mme. d'Estrées herself was absolutely shameless, and was so secure in the King's protection that she made no concealment of her way of life. If his conscience did ever trouble him, a sort of loyalty to his old mistress would have deterred him from interfering with her sister; and so, but for the dagger of Raveillac, Maubuisson might have continued as it was—a stain on religious life that by its very nature spread continually—for another ten or twenty years. But Henri IV. died, and it chanced that Mme. de Rambouillet called on society at large to recognize that vice was not necessary to enjoyment, just at the time when la Mère Angélique was showing that high ideals were not mythical, and the practice of the conventual theory could be carried out by women in their sober senses. The death of Henri IV. removed

one influence towards levity ; society was awestruck at the manner of his death, and the moment was propitious for the reception of new impressions. Where the first summons was ineffectual, the second, by a larger demand and yet more vigorous reality, accomplished its awakening purpose, and both together made the old order no longer possible.

It would seem that Angélique d'Estrées and the Father Superior of Citeaux were aroused simultaneously to a realization of the gradually developing trend of public opinion, which threatened to bring home to them, respectively, their sins of commission and omission ; and the former, though utterly scornful of reform, and secretly indignant against its originator, did not disdain to ask la Mère Angélique for advice, bearing down suddenly upon Port-Royal for this purpose. Angélique was perfectly competent to deal with her visitor. She had a vivid recollection of her sojourn at Maubuisson, when doubtless she had seen and noted with wondering childish eyes much that afterwards became comprehensible. The utter impracticability of a reform directed by the chief offender, and undertaken simply on the motive of expediency, was particularly evident to her, because she knew what reform meant ; but in those days she was full of generous hopefulness, and she offered to come herself to Maubuisson as prioress under Mme. d'Estrées to teach the nuns the theory of Port-Royal. Perhaps her guest had arrived with the idea of making some such proposition, remembering the charming child of earlier days, and imagining that her return in a new character would satisfy the world, without involving any intolerable changes in existing conditions. But a glimpse of Port-Royal blighted all hope of such an easy solution of the difficulty, and Mme. d'Estrées hurried back towards Maubuisson convinced that the future could not threaten her with anything more to be repudiated than the interference of Angélique Arnauld.

The Abbot, however, whose error had been that of over-toleration, perceived that his reputation depended on his taking some decisive step regarding the irregularities at Maubuisson.

He also needed advice, but preferred to apply for it to many sources. He came to Paris and consulted many persons of light and leading. At that moment there were no dissentient voices; the condition of Maubuisson was a crying scandal to Church and State, and it was evident that if it was suffered to continue, the indignation that was now directed towards the Abbess would speedily be diverted to the Father General of the Order of Clairvaux, on whom devolved the responsibility of rectifying the fault that Henri IV. had heedlessly committed. The task was not an enviable one, for the effrontery of Mme. d'Estrées was impenetrable, and she had a firm hold over her nuns; but it chanced that at that particular epoch, her brother, the Marshal d'Estrées, and her cousin, the Cardinal de Sourdis, had quarrelled with her over a family matter, and the weight of their influence, which was very considerable, went into the scale against her.

The Abbot went to Maubuisson at last, therefore, with a comfortable security that the popular voice would support him in his censure, and Mme. d'Estrées, by throwing down the gauntlet of defiance at once, made his path clear. Her assertion of independence went the length of a definite refusal to see him, though he had the right of the religious superior to claim an audience. When he summoned a chapter she would not attend it; and when, finally, he withdrew, he had been given no opportunity for personal remonstrance or rebuke. This was precisely what he had expected. A few months earlier he had sent a representative from Citeaux to enforce his directions for reform, and the unlucky monk had been imprisoned and half-starved by order of the Mother-Abbess, and returned to Citeaux (thankful of a chance to regain his liberty) with his mission unfulfilled. The Father-Abbot took precautions against all risk of a similar fate, but his visit was equally fruitless.

The position therefore was absolutely simple. Angélique d'Estrées was Abbess of Maubuisson, a convent under the Benedictine Rule, and so was bound to the maintenance of the cloister, to the vow of poverty, and to the obedience to her superior, which the Rule enjoined. She had not only ignored

these obligations, but had outraged the ordinary laws of morality in a flagrant manner.* An opportunity for explanation had been offered her and she had not taken it, and therefore the time had come to resort to the arm of the law. Accordingly, on February 5, 1618, the Provost and his archers arrived at Maubuisson with a warrant to remove the Mother-Abbess to the institution called "Les Filles Penitentes de S. Magloire" in the Rue S. Denis.

For the first time since Henri IV. installed her in her luxurious domicile, Angélique d'Estrées asserted the privilege of the cloister. Her method, however, differed from that of her namesake at Port-Royal, and the result proved less successful. Instead of confronting the intruders she fled from her bed to the remotest hiding-place she could think of, hoping that the emissaries of justice might retire discomfited, and give her time to escape. But possibly the experience of M. Arnauld had been of service to the Provost, for he had come provided with scaling-ladders, and his patient search was rewarded by the discovery of the culprit, whom he proceeded to convey ignominiously upon a mattress to her place of punishment. And that same evening the Father-Abbot appeared again at Maubuisson. He found the nuns in a state of utter consternation, for probably neither Mme. d'Estrées nor her companions had been prepared for such drastic measures. Plainly it was the psychological moment for extracting any concession from them, and the Abbot, while he had the wit to avail himself of it, had also the wisdom not to press them unduly, and veil coercion behind a semblance of free choice. The most rebellious of them could not deny that during the enforced absence of the Abbess a substitute must be invested with her powers. The Abbot lost no time in nominating three reigning Superiors of other convents, and left the nuns to decide before morning which of the three they would prefer as their ruler. Angélique Arnauld was individually known and loved by most of them, but her reputation appalled them. The debate during the night was eager, and the decision in her

* Guilbert, "Mem. de Port-Royal," vol. ii. p. 65.

favour by no means unanimous; but the affection which was always accorded to her, even by those who had most cause to dread her, decided the fate of Maubuisson, and the Abbot received the answer he desired. But although from the first all eyes had turned to her as the fittest missionary to the heathen nuns, even the Father-Abbot could not command her to surrender her post at Port-Royal, and there was a possibility that she might refuse the awful responsibility.

The letter, half pleading, half authoritative, in which the Abbot made his proposition is worth regarding, for it shows the position which Angélique held in the minds of many who were quite outside either her own family or the little circle of Port-Royal. "My duty demands," wrote the Abbot, "that I should attempt by all rightful means to accomplish a real reformation, causing the nuns to live according to the precepts of our Rule. All the persons of repute who talk to me look towards you and advise me to employ you to bring this about. . . . You will find the nuns well disposed to receive and practise the Rule. I hope that you will not refuse to do them the charity of instructing them, and will recognize a certain obligation to offer your service.

"Do not forget that, being a professed religious of this particular house, you are specially bound to contribute to its welfare and honour. The opportunity is offered you to-day, the obstacle being removed, provided that you are ready to seize it with the zeal and the talent that God has given you; and as it is the general opinion that you only are competent to accomplish this holy work, you will be resisting His Spirit if you decide otherwise. I pray that God will direct you by His grace, Madame, and that He will give you the strength and courage for such an undertaking." *

If the Father-Abbot was in any real doubt as to her reply, Angélique soon set his fears at rest. The claim to venture all for a forlorn hope appealed to her strenuous temperament, and she was influenced also by the desire (which had been so peremptorily

* Dated February, 1618. Quoted by Guilbert, "Mem. de Port-Royal," vol. ii. p. 70.

checked eight years earlier) of some day escaping from the responsibility of her office at Port-Royal. The invitation to leave her post for a while might well prepare the way for permanent retirement, and the fact that the invitation was a Call filled her with hope that the Divine Will might be directing her according to her secret wishes.

The announcement of her impending departure was received as the most terrible calamity at Port-Royal. She was as the very mainspring of life to her nuns; the extraordinary strength of her personality had inspired and supported them hitherto, and it was hard to realize those conditions of daily routine which she had created, when her presence was removed. Probably in view of their despair, Angélique was more than ever convinced that the call to her was the Call of God, for the dependence on herself which was thus revealed to her was against the theory that dependence should be placed in God only, which seemed to her the basis of true religious life. The pain of parting was a lesson in self-knowledge to her sister Agnès. All her life she loved Angélique devotedly, and no other mortification could equal that of separation from her. In their quiet life at Port-Royal she had not expected to be called to that particular form of suffering, and awoke to a startled sense that her self-surrender had, after all, been incomplete when any event could cause such agony of mind. It is characteristic of her and of the true spirit of Port-Royal that, when Angélique had gone, she sought refuge at the foot of the Crucifix, and knelt there oblivious of possible observation, murmuring amid the sobs that conscience bade her check, "Ecce nos reliquimus omnia—omnia!" *

It was in the same spirit of complete self-surrender that Angélique undertook her mission. It was a solemn moment, and she had the deepest realization of its gravity. She had chosen two companions from Port-Royal—Isabel de Chateau-neuf and her own young sister, Marie-Claire †—and she did not disguise from them that the demand of duty on their endurance and

* Guilbert, "Mem. de Port-Royal," vol. ii. p. 73.

† Professed September, 1616.

resolution was likely to be of the most searching order. "When you gave yourself to God," she said to them, "you offered Him your life. The time has come to complete the sacrifice in service where it is so greatly needed." And to Marie-Claire especially she set down as a special charge: "I have but one rule to impress upon you—that of entire charity; it will require us to put away all thought of our own health or our own interests that we may save the souls of others. I know your bodily weakness, and have therefore already made your life an offering to God, having small doubt that you will forfeit your health. I have even selected your place and your bed in the infirmary of Port-Royal, where you can pass such feeble remainder of life as will be left to you after having squandered your strength in setting an example to these poor nuns, who will need to be taught rather by practice than by precept." *

These prognostications, gloomy as they sounded, were not based on any exaggerated fears.† Angélique knew perfectly well what lay before her; she remembered what she had seen and heard before she was called to office at Port-Royal, and had no reason to believe that Maubuisson had altered its customs for the better during the intervening years. All the worst evils of decadent monasticism had been nurtured there, till the nuns, vowed to obedience as they were to their Superior, and thus pledged to pay deference to one of the most dissolute women of her generation, lost all distinctions between right and wrong, and were steeped in vices of whose nature they had no real knowledge.

A considerable number of the nuns of Maubuisson had been forced into taking the veil, and most of them were hopelessly ignorant of even the outer husks of that faith to which they were supposed to have dedicated their lives. Certain nominal rules there were that it was necessary to keep. Confessions must be made at stated periods, even if they attributed no meaning to the sacrament of penance. The monks who directed them recognized the necessity, but were always ready to accept whatever

* Guilbert, "Mem. de Port-Royal," vol. ii. p. 77.

† Isabelle de Chateau-neuf died in 1626.

formula was offered, and the more intelligent among the nuns, finding the recurring obligation to remember past events too great a tax upon them, composed three different classes of confession, one for Sundays, one for feast-days, and one for an ordinary week-day. These they wrote down and passed from hand to hand that it might do duty for them all. Office also—in deference to custom and public opinion—must needs be sung, but there were no regulations as to the time to be spent in chapel, and so it might be sung with extreme rapidity. The nuns of Maubuisson, it must be remembered, had a great deal to occupy them. Paris was very near, and when the Court was in Paris, there were many social obligations to fulfil, little feasts in their private apartments, comedies to be arranged for the entertainment of a select circle of guests, elegant adaptations of religious garb to be devised. And when the gay world was not in reach, they consoled themselves with promenading on the high-road in parties of three or four, or cultivated the innocent and healthful art of dancing in company with the monks of the neighbouring Abbey of S. Martin de Pontoise.*

To these conditions Angélique was coming, fresh from the quiet order of Port-Royal, where her own fervour was reflected by her companions, and disobedience to the Rule was deadly sin. And the Rule itself—the Rule for which she had fought and won her battle with her kindred—was as binding on these frail, light-minded women at Maubuisson as on any of her self-devoted sisters at Port-Royal. Stripped of all glory of voluntary consecration, of the lust of giving which animated the reformers, the shell of the vow still remained, a thing that could not be evaded, binding those who had taken it to maintain the cloister, to be poor, austere, and chaste, and to render absolute obedience to authority. It was indelibly imprinted on the very soul of Angélique, and the Father-Abbot of Citeaux, as he conducted her to the field of conflict, knew that he had been well advised, and if it were possible to cleanse Maubuisson, the Abbess Angélique would do it. He assembled a chapter when she arrived, and

* Guilbert, "Mem. de Port-Royal," vol. ii. p. 65.

formally gave her full authority over the community. He thought that the occasion demanded also some written memorial of his wishes, and, after leaving, he drew up regulations, framed with a special view to the abuse in vogue under Mme. d'Estrées, and intended to facilitate the restoration of order and seemliness. By so doing he gave la Mère Angélique an additional proof of his sympathy and approval, but unwittingly increased her difficulties. His messenger was his own secretary, who, naturally, knew the contents of the packet. He delivered it, as in duty bound, but he hastened to forestall and destroy the impression it was intended to make, by assuring the nuns that it was not a free act of favour from the Father-Superior, but had been extorted from him after much persuasion from their new Abbess. His action is significant of the whole attitude of the Bernardine monks towards reform. Their opposition was the most pressing of all the difficulties against which Angélique had to struggle, and it is one which does not reveal itself at the first glance, for it would seem that if her instinct warned her against any individual monk, it was easy to avoid intercourse with him. But the constitutions of the Order of S. Benedict forbade this simple expedient. S. Benedict, interpreted by S. Bernard of Clairvaux, having ordained that the nuns of the Order should be under the direction of monks of the same community, a Bernardine monk had a claim to the attention of a Mother-Abbess, and a certain right of interference in the affairs of the convent, even when he had no recognized office in connection with it, to which no other priest or layman could aspire. Had the monks been such as their founder pictured them the arrangement would have benefited their sisters in religion. The fact that they were not hardly requires demonstration. The story of the crusade, led first by de Bérulle, and afterwards—with far greater violence—by de Rancé, against the luxury and immorality prevalent in the monasteries of France, indicates the danger that the guileless confidence of a mediæval saint had prepared for his daughters. Moreover, it was not surprising that the monks should utilize their legitimate powers to thwart every effort at reform, for if the same Rule bound the religious of both

sexes, its re-establishment, even in such a small and obscure branch of the community as that of Port-Royal, involved an undesirable suggestion of their own shortcomings.

The subject of monastic iniquities is a peculiarly repulsive one, but it cannot be ignored in a study of the work of Angélique Arnauld. Viewed with the eyes of modern civilization and decorum much that she did and ordained to be done appears to be the fruit of mad fanaticism. But she was face to face with an evil that was as a canker at the very heart of the Church—she might not shrink from it in abhorrence, hiding her eyes in womanly confusion, but was summoned to make definite resistance. It was her method to regard it boldly, calculating its danger to the interests that she had at heart and attempting to reap advantage from the violence of contrast between the evil of what was and the brightness of that which should be.

The difficulty of her task, first at Port-Royal, and afterwards at Maubuisson, was enhanced a hundred-fold by the delinquencies of Bernardine directors, but it would have proved insuperable had she not possessed the power of appraising character almost at a glance, and been able to combine the deepest reverence for the Church with an absolutely unbiassed judgment concerning its ministers. "We have here at our door," she wrote once to Mme. de Chantal, "a Capuchin Superior, a clever and popular man, but his temper is indescribable. He would like me to coax him, to talk to him and give him my confidence, and I simply cannot, whereat he is so much annoyed that he grumbles loudly. But in good sooth I know not what to think of these absurd tempers or how to believe that souls given over to such folly can have a great capacity for prayer as he is said to have. I waste a great deal of time and throw away much mental energy; for all that I say to him is the purest frivolity, and even so I have to deceive and intrigue to get rid of him. I find myself forced into this with most monks. I find it a thousand times more perilous to talk to the religious than to the secular." *

There is considerable bitterness in these comments, but at

* "Lettres de la Mère Angélique," vol. i. No. 1.

least we may infer from them that Angélique was not priest-led according to the usual acceptation of that scornful phrase. The help that she received from de Sales at Maubuisson, and that which afterwards came to her from Saint-Cyran, was not accepted by any means blindly. It is significant, moreover, that while the name of de Sales is not generally linked to the thought of Port-Royal, that of Saint-Cyran is almost inseparable from it, for had she been ready to defer and reform her inclinations under direction, it is undoubtedly to de Sales that her community would have looked for inspiration, and it would have been from him and his recorded sayings that their spirit would have been formed. But in spite of her love of him, of his comprehension of her and infinite tenderness for her, François de Sales and Angélique Arnauld were not kindred spirits, and it was not till she met one of her own fibre, one oppressed as she was with an ever-growing sense of the sin of the world, and the demand for the deepest penitence from all who awakened to the claim of Christ, that she did make the final and unreserved surrender of her will, and desire to be ruled by any judgment other than her own.

It should, then, be recognized that no other stern director suggested or approved the system that la Mère Angélique adopted at Maubuisson, but that instead she was systematically harassed and frustrated in work, undertaken under obedience and carried out for the glory of God and the honour of the Order, by those who were even more bound to devote themselves to both these aims than she was herself, seeing that they held the privilege of the priest in addition to that of the religious.

It was accepted at Port-Royal that the Rule of S. Benedict as to poverty demanded literal interpretation, and each cell contained only its trestle bed, a little wooden table, one rough chair, five unframed sacred pictures, and a lamp. At Maubuisson the cells differed but little from the apartments of fine ladies in the gay world, and the nuns were surrounded with luxuries and well served by attendants. At Port-Royal the Bernardine Rule that prescribed perpetual fast from meat was strictly observed, but at Maubuisson the table in the refectory was spread with every

delicacy. The simple idea of S. Benedict had been that his children should be sufficient to themselves and make all they required with their own hands; it was an ideal that Angélique and her sisters strove to fulfil, but at Maubuisson no thought of labour save in the interests of amusement was ever entertained. The Abbot of Clairvaux had given Angélique full powers, and had himself decreed that the cloister should be recognized; but she, while insisting on that essential point, refrained from any violent assault on a system of self-indulgence which she knew could not profitably be altered by coercion.

The main reason for the evil case of Maubuisson was the example of Mme. d'Estrées, and Angélique, therefore, relied on the practice of the true religious life, as she and her two sisters "completing their sacrifice of service" endeavoured to live it, to convince their companions that their vow, if obeyed, became a joy far greater than any the forbidden world could offer. As was her wont, she was extreme in practice. Because it was the custom of the convent to sleep on down, she and her fellow-missionaries refused even a trestle bedstead; for six months they shared a mattress on the floor as a testimony to their vow of poverty, and when the Mother-Abbess at length agreed to take an apartment to herself, she chose one beneath the stairs,* where a lay-sister had lately died, and which was provided with a couch so hard and lumpy that she acknowledges she shrank from it at first, although afterwards she could rest on it as peacefully as elsewhere. "Until then," she said afterwards (and in view of the austerities of her first conversion the statement has a subtle interest), "I had never understood what it meant to die to self. Each day I learnt more and more to renounce my will."

In fact, the experience of those years at Maubuisson contained a very different lesson from any that could be learnt by voluntary mortification. Hitherto she had been an object of veneration both by right of her position and by reason of her personal reputation, but the loyal subjects of Mme. d'Estrées desired above all things to drive her from her post, and, aided by the monks

* Clemencet, "Hist. de Port-Royal," vol. i. p. 81.

(against whom even the maintenance of the cloister was no protection), they subjected her to such petty humiliations as a woman's ingenuity can invent; an ordeal that was far more trying to a proud spirit than the fiercest open opposition.

At Port-Royal the wish of her heart had been to retire from her office and become a humble and unknown novice in some other convent. She feared the reverence she inspired (in spite of her pride she had a deep instinct of humility), and courted the abasement which destiny had denied her. At Maubuisson she was taught what humiliation meant, not so much by the intentional insults of others as by the effect that they produced in herself. She had imagined that her will was already surrendered, and she found herself continually roused to fierce rebellion. It was a lesson far sharper than any she could have devised for herself, but the poignancy of that self-revelation only intensified her desire to surrender a charge of which she believed herself to be unworthy. Weary and sick at heart she turned to her trusted friend Mme. de Chantal, and won from her sympathy and encouragement, for her scheme itself and for its motive. She had thought that the call to Maubuisson was to open the way for her escape; the foundation of the Community of the Visitation, of which Mme. de Chantal was Superior, seemed to her to indicate the detail of her new vocation with irresistible force.

That Angélique Arnauld remained at Port-Royal is a matter of history, yet she would assuredly have joined the novices under Mme. de Chantal but for the intervention of François de Sales. It is a curious episode, and not less interesting because abortive. While she still reigned at Maubuisson and was nominally ruler at Port-Royal, she delighted to depict herself as completely subject to her friend. The chronicle of that period shows her to us as strong, self-reliant, courageous, as the leader of a forlorn hope should be, but in her letters we see her as she saw herself, and so are taught that that long-cherished plan of hers was no fantastic dream of a weary woman's fancy, but the outcome of quiet and melancholy self-examination.

"Day after day," she writes to Mme. de Chantal, "I never

fail to observe and think about outsiders when the grille is opened for them at Mass, and so much am I distracted by them that I cannot attend to the sermon. I am often very ill-tempered, and since I last wrote to you, I have been often very impatient with my sisters, rebuking them sharply. Two or three times I have acted with hypocrisy, refusing what was offered me on the pretext of abstinence, when the true reason was that I did not like it, and should have taken it if I had. Daily I chatter nearly all the time that we are at table, very often gossip and foolishness, and I check the reader either with impatience or with mockery. I cannot find time for talking with my sisters because I waste it. Once I left my prayers half said from mere wantonness and irreverence, and once for this last reason I did not go to Office.

"And in all my sin the special point is that, as a rule, even as I do it, I see the evil of it, and what it would be right to do; and although I try to shut my eyes to it, I cannot do so." *

This, it is obvious, is the confession of one who has realized the difficulty of keeping in that narrow way about which so much is said and so little understood. To find it and keep to it at whatever cost was the honest desire of her whole soul. "We can only advance in the love of Christ by increasing in hatred of ourselves," she wrote at another time. "Nowadays we do not die on the wheel or by fire or sword, but in the thousand small opportunities of giving up our own opinions, our own inclinations and desires, opportunities which, by the goodness of God, are offered to us daily." †

Assuredly the Mother-Abbess who becomes a novice is making the truest endeavour in her power to slay the last remnant of self-love. Angélique was always uncertain of herself, distrustful of the reality of her own aspirations. To humble herself thus utterly was to her as a beautiful and satisfying dream, and it is by a curious paradox that we find her surrendering under obedience what had seemed the ideal of self-renunciation.

Mme. de Chantal was in some part responsible for the

* "Lettres de la Mère Angélique," vol. i. No. 1 (1620).
† Ibid., vol. i. No. 26.

impetuous ardour of Angélique's desire to cast off her responsibilities and seek seclusion. She had age and experience and an extraordinary reputation for saintliness to add to her personal influence, and, had she checked the first revelation of the younger woman's desire, it could not have grown to such over-mastering dimensions. But the idea of sacrifice appealed to her, and no doubt she pictured the Abbess of Port-Royal rising from her self-imposed humiliation to be the glory and prop of her newly founded Community of the Visitation. Therefore, she promised to make a personal effort to win de Sales to her opinion, not doubting that the task would prove an easy one. The description of the eagerness of Angélique is pathetic when we remember how consistently she was wont to check every personal desire. "Finally," wrote Mme. de Chantal, having set forth her own opinion and her reasons for it to the clear-eyed guide of souls, "whatever one may say or whatever one may think, it is all but as oil cast on the fire of her ardour, and if she must needs be denied her wish, you only can do it. For you—as she repeats in writing to me—she will abandon all at a word, but otherwise she will not for the whole world. She tells me also that she has a certainty that is indescribable that God is calling her to us. I have the same conviction." *

"I sometimes think that if my wish is denied me I must assuredly die," wrote Angélique, out of the agony of her suspense, "for I know not how to resign myself to living on as I am. Although I am ready enough in saying 'I will if God wills,' it is not from my heart. I say it rather from fear that if I express myself otherwise, my desire should seem like a temptation, and that I cannot contemplate. It seems to me, indeed, as if, should Monseigneur de Genève himself tell me that it is so, I would not believe him. Nevertheless, if I could fulfil my desire independent of him, I would not, for I would rather die than disobey him. Yet it appears to me impossible that I should tear the desire from my heart." †

* "Lettres de Mme. de Chantal," 1621.

† "Lettres de la Mère Angélique," vol. i. No. 1.

Never is la Mère Angélique more human, more akin to each one of the ever-growing band of women who faintly echo her aspirations after holiness, than when she falls a prey to the passionate contradictory impulses, which, if they do win a moment's mastery over a resolute nature, can torture to the limit of endurance. Her self-repression would mean far less—let us acknowledge it—if her defences had not sometimes broken down. "Although I am ready enough in saying 'I will if God wills it,' it is not from my heart"—that, surely, is a self-revelation which every honest seeker after righteousness has echoed constantly, but to Angélique it was peculiarly bitter. For, in fact, the Will of God (if, as she deeply and loyally believed, François de Sales was its exponent) was not that she should step aside and bow her neck to a new and self-chosen yoke of humility, but that she should go bravely forward with head erect, for the encouragement of others, in spite of the heavy burden of responsibility upon her shoulders.

François de Sales himself required courage to combat the ardour and conviction of two such women as Mme. de Chantal and Angélique Arnauld. We have seen how high an opinion he conceived of Angélique from the first, and he attached great importance to her guidance on this question. He kept her in a suspense that strained her nerves and temper for many months, and then refused her plea. He had tried to prepare her for refusal, it is true. "I showed myself not merely unresponsive, but actually adverse to her resolve," he says; "when I was in Paris, I never would yield to the wish that Mme. de Port-Royal expressed to me, of quitting the Order to which she has hitherto done such good service. I returned hither" (he was writing from Annecy) "without a misgiving on the point, but I have received repeated appeals from her to sanction her wishes and approve her ideas." * Apparently Angélique's reiterated remonstrances did not move him in the least, and it was only in response to Mme. de Chantal that he consented to any reconsideration. As we know, neither prayer nor reflection weakened the certainty of his decision,

* François de Sales to Père Binet, November, 1621.

yet in giving it he seems to have deepened his tenderness for Angélique herself. He would fain have decided otherwise, for the Community of the Visitation was very specially his own, and he could have rejoiced with Mme. de Chantal in welcoming her amongst their chosen flock, recognizing the grandeur underlying her folly. "I was well aware that her desire was extraordinary," he said, "but I saw that her soul was extraordinary also. I was well aware of her natural instinct for commanding others, but I saw that it was to crush that predilection that she desired to chain herself to obedience. I was well aware that she was but a woman; but I saw that in command she had been much more than a woman, and that in obedience she would be the same."

In fact, as he was, doubtless, "well aware," he himself put her obedience to the sharpest possible test, and did not find it fail. For a time the zest of life, the hope that had inspired her in every fresh exertion, was deadened, for she was still young enough to have woven every thought around one cherished scheme so that every prospect was darkened by its failure. But, when she looked back in after years, though honest regret for the long-past denial survived, there is no hint of doubt that de Sales had guided her rightly, nor trace of bitterness towards him. If it is true that more violent methods than his pleased her better, that admission does not entail a lower estimate of her love and reverence for him. She said once to a nun of the Holy Sacrament that it seemed to her that he (S. Francis) was continually near her as her good angel, especially when she sought the presence of God.*

That fruitless dream of la Mère Angélique, though it served its purpose in deepening her character and her self-command, seems like a waste of suffering in a life where there was necessarily so much to suffer. It is a relief to turn from her heart-searchings and her greed of spiritual self-abasement to the record of the visible difficulties and dangers, which, at this very period when her inner life was so disturbed by a tempest of conflicting hopes and fears, assailed her from without.

We have seen the method she adopted at Maubuisson. She

* Clemencet, "Hist. de Port-Royal," part i. liv. 5.

had tried it at Port-Royal with success, and though the new ground proved itself to be far more arid, she believed she could force it to bear fruit. She based much of her hope for the future on a fresh importation of novices, and of these there was no lack. Then and at all times she seems to have had a magnetic power of drawing fresh recruits, and this in spite of the fact that she had a most vigorous view of vocation, and submitted every postulant to tests that would speedily have quenched a desire for the religious life that was merely sentimental. La Sœur Isabel de Chateauneuf (though only nineteen) was made novice-mistress, and showed a conspicuous capacity for that difficult office. Within a year she had a band of thirty under her care, and the traditions of Port-Royal promised eventually to reign at Maubuisson. The silence, the frequent fasts, the abstinence from meat, the manual labour and reverend singing of Office—in short, every detail of the Rule of S. Benedict—received punctual observance, and the same harmony and contentment that prevailed at Port-Royal was evident among the novices.

But the old inhabitants of the convent remained obdurate. They had lost much under the authority of la Mère Angélique, but they would not consent to gain anything. They were prevented from visiting or receiving their friends, they had no comedies to enliven the monotony, nor was there any facility for obtaining news of the gay doings in Paris. But they still gabbled and screeched in choir, indifferent to sense or harmony; they still chattered among themselves in season and out of season; they still lived on dainty fare (for Angélique had instituted a separate refectory for the Port-Royalists and the novices),* and refused to soil their hands with anything more arduous than fine needle-work. Their condition was pitiable, the discontent of the majority augmented daily, and the fact that the Mother-Abbess was the sharer and the leader in every labour and in every hardship imposed upon her novices, only increased their irritation.

Meanwhile Mme. d'Estrées was employing every wile that she had learnt in many years' experience, to wheedle the law-

* Clemencet, "Hist. de Port-Royal," part i. liv. 3.

givers of Paris into restoring her to her charge at Maubuisson. The moral tone of society was not a high one, and it seems to have been probable that she would win her case and return with flying colours. A reckless and ill-considered move made havoc of her chances, however. The régime of the "Filles Penitentes" tried her patience beyond endurance, and on the night of September 9, 1619, she managed to escape, and appeared at dawn the following morning at Maubuisson, accompanied by M. le Comte de Sangé and a troop of her old admirers, most of whom regarded the enterprise as a novel species of practical joke, and found it hard to understand that the new inhabitants of the convent would not extend the welcome which they were accustomed to receive there.

If Angélique had been forewarned she could not have defended herself when there were so many traitors in the citadel, and Mme. d'Estrées had been admitted before she was fully aware of her approach.* She told the story of their encounter to her nephew, M. le Maistre, as follows: "About the hour of Tierce, the Abbess appeared among us, having left M. de Sangé and his companions outside. As we went into choir, she approached me and said: 'Madame, I have come here to thank you for the care you have taken of my abbey during my absence, and to advise you to return now to your own, leaving me the charge of mine.' I answered: 'Madame, I should be most willing to do so if I might, but you know that it is our Superior, M. l'Abbé de Citeaux, who bade me come to take direction here, and having come under obedience, it is only under obedience that I can leave.' She rejoined that she was Abbess, and was going to take her place. I answered: 'Madame, you are no longer Abbess, you have been deposed.' She said: 'I have appealed.' I answered: 'Your appeal is not sanctioned, and meanwhile the sentence of deposition holds good in the Order and as concerns me; and as I was placed here by M. de Citeaux and by order of the King, I am obliged to regard you as deposed. Therefore forgive me if I take the Abbess's place.' And therewith I took

* Guilbert, "Mem. de Port-Royal," vol. ii. p. 106.

my place, having the support of the nuns whom I had admitted within the year. I talked with the sisters afterwards, and said to them especially that we should do well to receive at Mass that we might implore the help of the Holy Spirit in the crisis that was imminent. Most of them were intending to do so as it was a feast-day of our Order. Nearly thirty of us received the Holy Sacrament.

"Outside the church there was no sign that anything was happening in the building, and there was no noise. I was convinced that she would drive me out of the abbey, but I was altogether astonished that when she had spoken to Père Sabbatier (the monk who was our confessor), he should come to me after dinner to advise me to withdraw and yield to force. I told him I should not do so, and that my conscience would not permit it. But I was yet more astonished to see him come into the church with M. de Sangé's four gentlemen, and come forward as their leader to exhort me once more to yield to force and depart, to prevent the evil that might ensue if I forced them to take violent measures. (One even fired a pistol, imagining he would frighten me by so doing.) But I was not agitated, and I answered once again that I would not retire except under compulsion, as it was only under those circumstances that I should feel myself absolved by God.

"At this point my nuns surrounded me, and each one placed her hand within my girdle, thereby so tightening it that I could hardly breathe. Mme. d'Estrées grew heated in abuse of me, and—she having touched my veil and given it a little pull as if she desired to drag it from my head—my sisters, who were lambs, became as lions, not being able to endure any insult towards me, and one, who was big and strong (her name was Anne de Ste. Théde, the daughter of a gentleman), went close to her and said: 'Are you so insolent as to seek to take the veil from Mme. de Port-Royal? You miscreant! I know you, I know what you are!' And therewith, in full face of these men with their drawn swords, she snatched her veil from her head and hurled it six paces away.

"Mme. d'Estrées seeing I was resolved not to withdraw, bade these gentlemen expel me by force, and this they did, laying hold of my arms. I made no resistance, being well pleased to depart and take my nuns away from a place where there were such men as these, from whom I had everything to fear, both on their behalf and my own. It was not, however, Mme. d'Estrées's wish that they should go with me, for she feared the publicity of that. For this reason she had me placed in a carriage. But no sooner had I taken my place than nine or ten of my nuns followed me, three climbed on the coachman's box, three got up at the back like footmen, and the rest clung to the wheels. Mme. d'Estrées bade the coachman whip up his horses, but he answered that he dared not, for he should kill many of the nuns.

"Thereupon I sprang out of the carriage with my sisters. I made them take strong waters because the plague was at Pontoise, whither I went with thirty of them, marching two and two as in a procession. As we went along, the lieutenant of Pontoise (who was of Mme. d'Estrées's following) rode past us and made merry at our expense, for the poor man imagined that she was really re-established. When we entered Pontoise, the people poured blessings upon us, exclaiming: 'Here come the nuns of our good Mme. de Port-Royal. They have left the Devil in their convent!'"

It is impossible not to feel, as we read Angélique's record of that adventure, that she really enjoyed the excitement of it. The scene of the encounter with Mme. d'Estrées was a church, and therefore there is a suggestion of sacrilege in the altercation and violence that characterized it, nevertheless there is a zest in her narration which betokens her admiration of Anne de Ste. Théde, and her vivid remembrance of the drawn swords and the astonished gentlemen. All the fighting blood of the Arnaulds was roused in her by the conduct of these gallant cavaliers, and it is plain that, so far as personal courage was concerned, she was absolutely undaunted. But she was responsible for the protection of her nuns from insult quite as much as from personal injury,

and if they had been exempt from the latter, it was quite evident they would not have escaped the former.

Her first thought as she entered the town was to seek a place for prayer, and as the Jesuit church was nearest they entered there. It was the hour for Vespers, and they joined the fathers in saying that Office. Truly Angélique required faith to sustain her, when once the excitement of the struggle was past. She was responsible for the welfare of the loyal thirty who had left Maubuisson with her, most of whom were ignorant of the ways of the world, and required real protection in that evil age, and she knew not where the night was to be spent. The Jesuit fathers, however, realizing her difficult position, hastened to make it known, and before darkness had closed in upon her, the residence of the "Vicaire Général" had been placed at her disposal, and the good people of Pontoise had overwhelmed her with provision for her comfort.

And her difficulty was destined to be of the briefest duration. Some of the following of Mme. d'Estrées had been so unwise as to maltreat the gatekeeper at Maubuisson, and he retaliated in the most effectual manner conceivable, by hastening to Paris to inform the friends of Mme. de Port-Royal (as influential in their way as those of Mme. d'Estrées) of the outrage. No time was wasted. In the afternoon of the next day the Provost and two hundred and fifty archers rode down from Paris to Maubuisson. Mme. d'Estrées, seeing herself overmatched, effected her escape. Dom Sabbatier, the confessor, betook himself to some safe haven in Pontoise, and the convent was once more at the command of its lawful Abbess. Angélique had only left her post under compulsion, and she hastened to return to it. Although it was after nightfall when the provost waited on her to inform her of the success of his enterprise, she mustered her thirty nuns forthwith, and marched back to Maubuisson, escorted (owing to the evident danger of attack from the discomfited followers of Mme. d'Estrées) by mounted archers with shouldered muskets and flaming torches, who completely surrounded the procession.

The episode was as brief as it was sensational, but it brought home to the Mother-Abbess the fact that the existing conditions ought not to be suffered to continue. She, with characteristic self-depreciation, regarded her mission as a failure, and represented to the authorities, religious and secular, that the only method of averting further danger from the conspiracies of Mme. d'Estrées was to appoint a permanent successor to the post which she had forfeited. While that arch-offender remained at large, and Angélique herself was regarded as a locum tenens only, there was little hope that the deplorable divisions within the convent would be healed, or that the services of the fifty archers, whom the Provost had left for its protection, would cease to be required. At Port-Royal, meanwhile, Agnès Arnauld was fulfilling her task as coadjutor to her sister with such success as to open the way for a more permanent shifting of authority.* The Abbot of Citeaux (who did not agree in Angélique's estimate of her work at Maubuisson) decided to answer her appeal for relief by offering the post to her, and Maubuisson was a richer and far more notable religious house than Port-Royal; but Angélique shrank in terror from the thought. She was home-sick for Port-Royal, and at the same time much more desirous of renouncing importance and authority than of acquiring it. Moreover, she could urge that she lacked qualifications which she believed would be to the advantage of the convent. It was an age when rank outweighed all else. If Mme. d'Estrées could be opposed by a successor having direct connection with the great ones of the Court, she would speedily be cowed into submission. It was even possible to suggest an individual with just that natural position which the occasion seemed to demand. Mme. de Soissons, an illegitimate daughter of the House of Condé, was a nun of very high reputation, and her appointment was generally approved of. She received a warm welcome from Angélique, and was extremely gracious in her response to all the advances of her Sister-Abbess, and if Angélique had been able to retire from the stage as soon as Mme. de Soissons was established, the last scene of her sojourn

* The Papal Bull authorizing her as coadjutor issued September, 1620.

at Maubuisson would have been peaceful and seemly. But it was fated that her whole connection with that house should be stormy and difficult, albeit of infinite importance to the development of her destiny, and her unhappy namesake was to the last the chief hindrance to her peace. Angélique d'Estrées, too desperate to reason, continued to appeal against her deprivation, and till her last plea was disallowed, it was impossible to procure the bull for the definite installation of Mme. de Soissons. Angélique Arnauld was thus constrained to remain there till her illustrious successor could legally take over the insignia of office, and though she did so unwillingly, it was at first under auspices that promised entire harmony. But this peaceful condition did not continue long. A certain Sœur Bigot, one of the old inhabitants, insinuated herself into the good graces of Mme. de Soissons, and gradually poisoned her mind against the reforming Abbess. The most distant courtesy replaced the previous cordiality of the great lady, and reduced itself to a degree of coldness and reserve which made Angélique's position almost untenable.

Under the circumstances some difficulty was inevitable, for Angélique remained at Maubuisson more than a year after the arrival of the new Abbess, and the conduct of la Sœur Bigot, though reprehensible, was perfectly natural. Many of the nuns had been in sympathy with the methods of Mme. d'Estrées; they had never had any semblance of vocation, and were not confounded or abashed when it was represented to them that their life was not in conformity with their vows. The advent of Mme. de Port-Royal had ushered in a new order that made them excessively uncomfortable; they thought her personal habits exaggerated, and had longed for her departure as the one hope of future peace or enjoyment for themselves. The bare idea that her successor would be infused with even a reflection of her spirit filled them with dismay, and they wisely decided that the surest method to prevent such a consummation was to sow discord between two ladies whose mutual position suggested rivalry. Once the seed had been dropped, it grew with amazing rapidity.

The natural temper of Angélique Arnauld was not distinguished by tolerance or docility, and Mme. de Soissons was extremely arrogant. Angélique saw that all her work would speedily be ruined by the ostentation and luxurious habits of the new-comer. In her distress she was so ill-advised as to turn to the monks of the Order (the Order in whose cause she had laboured so indefatigably) for consolation.

"I told them," she said afterwards, "of my dismay at the ambition which brought this Abbess to her post, and at the insult she cast at religion by her self-indulgence and daintiness. They answered 'that Mme. de Port-Royal ought not to judge a princess by herself, that the princess had sacrificed more than she had, not having her love of poverty and austerity.' But I told them that one who was an Abbess and a nun was no longer a princess; that she had yielded the one condition when she embraced the others."

La Mère Angélique in her righteous anger was perfectly honest, but probably the arrogance and fine-ladyism of her rival roused an instinct of antagonism that was not wholly righteous, but had its root in personal resentment at the slur cast on those principles of self-surrender and loyalty to the monastic vows, which she cherished as the very breath of life. "Ecce nos reliquimus omnia!" was the cry ever ascending from the hearts of the nuns of Port-Royal. Those who forfeited the right to utter it were—in the eyes of Angélique Arnauld—traitors to their vocation and their faith. "It is strange how these monks disturbed me," she said, "by telling me that it was right for me to live as meanly as the least among my nuns, but that I was doing wrong by the Abbesses who might succeed me. It disgusted me exceedingly, and was an outrage on my common sense. For I could not see how it was possible that that which was expedient for me should be harmful to other Abbesses, who would have no business to be such if they did not love poverty. The inconsequence and lack of spirituality in these monks nearly drove me to distraction, and if God had not held me up, I should have utterly fallen away from grace."

Yet she, in her turn, had given definite cause of offence to Mme. de Soissons. It must be acknowledged that her sweeping reforms were apt to foster an inclination towards intolerance. She was convinced of the necessity of poverty, and in her desire to infuse the true spirit of Port-Royal at Maubuisson, she had accepted novices who could bring no dower to the community. This was against tradition, and, as an innovation was obviously open to abuse, for those who might have given, sometimes refrained, when they found their daughters would be accepted on their own merits. Moreover, Angélique was not the permanent ruler, and it cannot be denied that Mme. de Soissons had some justice on her side when she inveighed against the high-handed dealing of Mme. de Port-Royal, and declared that her abbey "had been filled with beggars."

The phrase was repeated to Angélique, and immediately the embers of resentment that had been smouldering for so long on either side, burst into flame. No princess of the blood royal could be more haughty when occasion offered than Angélique the nun. She could not rest at Maubuisson after the affront. "If this house with its thirty thousand livres a year is overburdened by these thirty children of mine," she said, "my own with its six thousand shall be ready to receive them." And the event justified the rash retort. The nuns of Port-Royal responded to her appeal with an echo of her own enthusiasm. The Father-Abbot gave his sanction, Mme. Arnauld provided conveyances, and, with a rapidity that must have electrified her noble hostess, Mme. de Port-Royal arranged her affairs, mustered her flock of novices (for the professed could not be transferred so quickly), and shook the dust of Maubuisson from her feet.

The impulsive act was full of portent. At the time it seemed to Angélique chiefly to be a proof that all her work was wasted, because those on whom she had depended to carry it on were so insolently rebuffed; but in fact she had left an impression that could not be erased by the imperious ways of her successor, but which, it may be, was richer in result when the friction of antagonistic influences ceased. Four years later another Abbess

was summoned to Maubuisson from Port-Royal, and though she —la Mère Marie des Anges—had in her turn no easy task, she found the tradition that prevailed, however much it might, on occasion, be defied, was that of Angélique Arnauld, and retained no reminiscence of Angélique d'Estrées.

Maubuisson therefore did not suffer greatly by that wholesale removal; it was at Port-Royal that its effect was so far-reaching as to be incalculable.

CHAPTER IV

THE ORDER OF ADORATION

The carriages sent by Mme. Arnauld conveyed the novices of Maubuisson to the convent of Port-Royal, but la Mère Angélique herself lingered with her mother in Paris, seizing the moment to elaborate a scheme that for some time had been looming in her mind. The building at Port-Royal was small and unhealthy, and the rapid increase in the numbers of the community necessitated some new arrangement. This was sufficient reason for her projected step, but she was further actuated by a great desire to emancipate herself and her sisters from the control of the monks of Citeaux. This double inducement brought her to Paris to make tentative inquiries as to the possibility of removing the whole institution thither, and, fearing that difficulties might result from the wagging of tongues during her absence, she placed her novices under a rule of silence till she herself should arrive to regulate affairs.

There was deep delight among the nuns of Port-Royal when at length their Mother-Abbess returned to them, and foremost in rejoicing was la Mère Agnès, who from the moment of receiving her authority, had longed continually for the time when she might lay it down. Angélique herself had no conflict of feeling to disturb her; the poverty of Port-Royal was in itself a reason for thanksgiving. "The grandeur and wealth of the house I had left," she writes, "taught me that these are the miserable thorns that choke the Word of God, and I had seen so much of the curses and terrible consequences of vice, and the degree to which it had destroyed the pious intention of the good Queen who had founded the house from whence I came, that I was more than

ever in love with poverty. As far as I could I had trained all those whom I had admitted to love this virtue. And in truth they did learn to love it so well that they were delighted to find themselves in this poor house with its absolute peace."

According to every testimony, both the novices and the professed nuns who afterwards followed them from Maubuisson were sincerely thankful for the change. And yet it was no easy rule that la Mère Angélique imposed, and they were so overcrowded and the building was so unhealthy that they lived in the utmost outward discomfort. Moreover, it cannot have been easy to a number of young girls to maintain almost perpetual silence. Angélique regarded that form of self-denial as especially desirable for the development of the spiritual life, and here and there on the walls of the corridors she inscribed a code of signals that speech might be avoided even for the expression of actual needs. The effect of her experience at Maubuisson was to intensify her inclination towards austerity. She was ruthless in maintaining the spirit of S. Bernard. She had meditated on his directions for the monastic life till her mind was thoroughly imbued with his uncompromising theory of self-surrender. If François de Sales had lived he might have modified her tendencies; he is never shown to us in more attractive aspect than when he is reasoning with Angelique, half-playfully, always tenderly, yet with deep comprehension that the violent possibilities of her nature were a danger to her. "Do you not see that you are a little too hard on this poor soul," he wrote to her, in reply to a torrent of self-accusation. "You must not reproach her unduly, because she has very good intentions. Tell her that, however great a stumbler she may be, she should never be in such revolt against herself, that rather she should look up towards our Lord, who from heaven is mindful of her, as is a father towards his child whose feet cannot yet bear him steadily, to whom he whispers: 'Gently, my child, go gently!' If she be a child in humility, and knows that she is a child, she will not be disheartened because she falls, for she will not have fallen far." *

* May 14, 1620.

If that voice had not been silent in death, Angélique Arnauld must surely have used her power over the souls of others with less ferocious vigour. "Would it not be better, my daughter," de Sales had said to her as he marked the severity of the rule she was enforcing, "to catch smaller fish and more of them?"* His experience suggested that only a very few would respond to the demands she was making on endurance, but he under-estimated her personal hold. Not only among those who lived in constant intercourse with her, but also to many who saw her only at rare intervals, to some who never saw her at all, the fact of la Mère Angélique, or her strong conviction and unrelenting practice, was such an incentive to the leading of a devoted life that the results were not less than miraculous.† For the sensual, the exotic side of religious revival had no place under her direction. The assistance which may often be rightly derived from an appeal to the emotions was not within the scope of such a system as hers. For she was consistent in her adherence to S. Bernard, and S. Bernard regarded monotony as the fittest soil for the growth of spiritual life. The spirit of uniformity was more necessary than active mortification. Other Orders might subdue the flesh by fasting, by discipline, by rules of silence maintained for months at a time, but they demanded occasional relaxation—some meeting, when tongues were loosed and thoughts might be exchanged and wit displayed, some celebration of a festival when plenty might replace the bare necessity provided at other times. But for the daughters of S. Bernard there must be no landmarks in physical and individual life, the strength of their endurance was to have no foundation in anticipation of relief.‡ "Our fast, my sister," wrote la Mère Agnès, "lasts from Ash Wednesday to Easter and from Easter to Ash Wednesday."§ That saying involves far more than lies upon the surface. The life of the devotee may appear to be one of persistent self-abnegation, but it generally

* Clemencet, "Hist. de Port-Royal," part i. liv. 3.

† "Pour moi, disoient quelques-unes, quand elle parle je ne trouve rien de si juste que de faire ce qu'elle dit," (Ibid., vol. i. liv. 4).

‡ "Relation de M. Retart," Curé de Magny.

§ "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," vol. i. No. 216.

has its own peculiar element of sensation; self-will is often inextricably interwoven with outward and visible self-sacrifice, and sincerity in religion is not incompatible with love of religious excitement. But at Port-Royal the fast was not merely abstinence from meat—that was but the physical expression of a condition which was only made possible by a reality of spiritual aspiration that is rare even in the records of monasticism. The natural inclination of one who has voluntarily accepted the limitations of a convent life must tend to self-scrutiny; the faults of those who give themselves to almost continual silence and constant prayer must loom large in their own sight, and induce a craving for personal mortification as a salve to the wounds of self-esteem. La Mère Angélique knew all these tendencies from experience, and having herself been free to satisfy them, had learnt that for the health of the soul such remedies may often be worse than the disease. None knew better than she the relief to spiritual suffering that can be found in self-imposed physical privation. She had resorted to the remedy so often that at thirty her health was ruined by starvation, and, looking back, she realized that such excess was not in conformity with the spirit of S. Bernard. The performance of exterior penance meant excitement and a species of variety, and therefore it was not permissible.

"Adherence to the Rule is enough," said she; "penance must be reserved to expiate sin. It is then much more salutary than when practised simply out of devotion. There is a danger lest voluntary penance mean self-adornment rather than self-surrender." * It is by such observations that Angélique shows herself supremely competent as a director of souls. She had no intercourse with Bourdaloue, but she foreshadows that pregnant utterance of his, bringing it into the intimacy of community life, yet discerning the same spirit in a nun as he exposed in the penitents of the Court: "On se retire du monde mais on est bien aise que le monde le sache."

Austerity was as much her rule in that which concerned the spiritual as in the physical life. It was not that liberty of the

* Guilbert, "Mem. de Port-Royal," vol. ii. p. 131.

children of God which had been the ideal of François de Sales, but a far harsher ordinance that she embraced. There was much in her belief savouring of fear rather than love, yet the love that implies sacrifice was the vital root of every detail of her practice The two years succeeding her return from Maubuisson might have been a period of comparative ease. She had laboured undauntedly against almost overwhelming odds in a mission that had taxed even her courage; she had persevered when she had every excuse for despairing, and must—as she looked back over her work—have realized that she had effected an extraordinary change, even though the final result might fall far short of her desires. The retrospect of those five years might have tempted many a self-devoted and conscientious servant of God to seek a little relaxation before embarking on any fresh endeavour. But that was not the spirit of la Mère Angélique. The record * of the conditions of life she maintained at that period, indicates, on the whole, a sterner and severer rule than was practised by the community either before or afterwards. The conferences permitted in the first years of reform were dropped entirely; the time for recreation in the convent garden was spent in silence, except that in the midst of it Angélique would seat herself, with the sisters gathered round her, and read to them a passage out of the New Testament, to give them a fresh theme and inspiration for thought as they passed up and down the garden walks. It was part of the Rule that there should be choir sisters and lay sisters. Angélique could not impugn this ordinance of S. Bernard, but she made it an occasion for practising humility, and for weeks at a time the choir sisters performed those menial offices which were really the duty of the lay.

It would seem to have been a time of peace and of real mutual affection; there were anxieties, of course, some touching ways and means of living, some—but these troubled Angélique but little—in connection with the unhealthiness of Port-Royal and the increasing death-rate among the nuns. But the greatest pressure upon her was due to the monks of Citeaux, from whom

* Guilbert, "Mem. de Port-Royal," vol. ii. p. 178.

so much had been already suffered. The danger from this quarter was not likely to abate. Very superficial knowledge of human nature suggests that opposition to a species of reform which is a tacit reproach to those who do not practise it, is likely to become more and more bitter as time advances. Angélique knew the temper of the Bernardines only too well, and she, who made obedience the watchword of the community, trembled at the thought of the conflict between lawful authority and individual conscience that seemed an inevitable consequence of the contrasting systems of Citeaux and Port-Royal. It required faith to face the future calmly. Angélique—strong in her Catholic creed—showed at this moment a consistency which often appears to be lacking even among the professedly devout. She and her sisters had embraced a condition and a theory of life that did at least empower them to repeat with sincerity the "Ecce nos reliquimus omnia" of S. Peter, and in their distress they turned by a natural instinct to the abiding proof "of the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour, Jesus Christ." The Blessed Sacrament was reserved upon the altar at Port-Royal, and the nuns were wont to steal into the dark church and kneel in the stillness, drinking in hope and consolation when discouragement had clouded confidence, from the sense of the Presence of their Lord, most closely and intimately with them because of that Pledge of it in the shrine behind the single dimly burning lamp.

That which consoled them in individual distress would not fail when trials threatened them as a community. That was the obvious reasoning, and found a natural echo in their hearts when the Reverend Mother suggested it. We must recognize in the consequence of the strong sentiment of adoration towards the Blessed Sacrament which had gradually grown up at Port-Royal, a very definite epoch in the history of the community. It was not merely the outward expression of religious fervour that had been long latent in the souls of a band of devoted women, an act of homage that—humanly, at least—began and ended in relation to its authors; it was rather the inauguration of a condition that made the spirit of Port-Royal the strongest religious influence of

the age, and the supporters of Port-Royal the targets for the animosity of all who resented its silent rebuke to the lax methods and morals of the time.

The seed of that new condition was very small, and was nourished by apprehension of disaster. At any moment new hands might hold the reins of government at Clairvaux, and then new difficulties, impossible to foresee or estimate, must spring up about that way of righteousness on which the feet of Angélique and her sisters had long been set. Therefore they agreed to make a special and continuous act of adoration and humility before the Pledge of their Lord's Presence. Two and two they succeeded each other before the altar, day and night, the spirit which animated them being defined in the words of la Mère Agnès, when at a later time it was her task to draw up the Constitutions of Port-Royal. "The nuns," she writes, "shall use only such sayings as these out of the fulness of their hearts, crying to Jesus Christ as did S. Peter: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of Eternal Life;' or as S. Thomas: 'Thou art my Lord and my God;' or as the woman of Samaria: 'Lord, give me of the water of Life!' When their period of watch is over, if it should chance that the sisters who should succeed them have not come, they shall await their coming. Finally, the motto of the Nuns of the Blessed Sacrament shall be the word of the canticle: 'I sleep and my soul watches.'" *

Agnès† may be regarded as herself the type of the Nuns of the Blessed Sacrament. She was imbued with the true idea of mysticism, and the long years of her religious life had suppressed the claim of the body till the motto she had chosen was peculiarly apt. Carnal instincts in her seemed in very truth to be asleep. Silence was more welcome to her than speech, that she might continually listen to the whispering of the Spirit; her hunger and thirst were insatiable, but they were spiritual; her greatest longing was for the Presence of God. Yet she was not singular

* "Constitutions du monastère de Port-Royal du S. Sacrament," parts 6, 10, 11.

† Agnès Arnauld was professed at Port-Royal in May, 1612.

among her sisters in her practice of devotion, though her contemplative aspirations may have been more continuous, and, from whatever point of view we may regard their fervour, it is quite impossible to deny the absolute reality of the love and adoration animating the devotees of Port-Royal. They had left all to follow Christ, they believed with complete conviction in His mysterious Gift to mankind, the thought of it looming larger and larger before their inward vision in the silence of their Rule, till continuous adoration seemed the necessary and inevitable outcome of their sense of its tremendous significance. Had it been destined that the nuns of Port-Royal should remain obscure and uncriticized, there would be no need to dwell on this detail of their common life; but Angélique cannot be considered apart from the community, and the troubled period that followed her two years of voluntary mortification and sustained austerity at Port-Royal des Champs will be seen to have affected the community collectively as much as it affected her as an individual.

The event which had been apprehended for so long came to pass in 1625. Boucherat, Father-General of the Order of S. Benedict in France, died, and the hope of radical reform at the parent-house died with him. But Angélique had assurance of future immunity from the despotism she dreaded. Aided by the bounty of Mme. Arnauld, she had secured a great house in the Faubourg S. Jacques,* to which, when the needful alterations were accomplished, she had already obtained permission to migrate. By removing their domicile, she contrived that they should be removed also from the spiritual dominion of unworthy guides. M. de Nivelle, the successor of de Boucherat, was an open opponent of reform, and Angélique placed herself and her sisters in the hands of the Archbishop of Paris, confident that the risk of the unknown could not be more serious than the certainty of danger incurred if they remained at the mercy of the Bernardines.

It is impossible to form any definite judgment as to the wisdom

* Hôtel de Clagny. In a street known by the unsavoury name of "Rue de la Bourbe," now converted into the great Rue du Faubourg S. Jacques.

of this step. Persecution in one form or another was the inevitable destiny of the Port-Royalists if they maintained the strenuous and uncompromising rule of life ordained by Angélique Arnauld. Under episcopal jurisdiction they did not escape it, but it fell upon them in a manner evident to the world, and their resistance and endurance was a testimony to the strength of their cause; whereas the petty torments they would have suffered at the hands of directors, whose sole object seemed to be to discourage and distract them, must, in process of time, have undermined the resolution of the weaker spirits and hardened and embittered the strong, without giving any opportunity for bearing testimony to the support of the faith that was in them. Angélique—always ready in self-accusation—looked back on her decision at some later crises of her life with evident remorse. It had been taken (from the obvious and necessary conditions of the case) solely on her own initiative, and she persuaded herself that because independence was a natural instinct she had here yielded unduly to its prompting. If her self-reproach was well founded, it must have been a consolation to her to feel that she bore the brunt of the consequent difficulties. In fact, when she left the solitudes of Port-Royal des Champs behind her, she entered upon a new chapter of her history that contained sorrows and humiliations far more intimate and searching than anything in her previous experience.

At the very outset, when, full of hope and thankfulness, she realized that she was at length freed from the false monastic rule that had hampered and encumbered her so long, and set about regulating the life of the community with an earnest desire for the furtherance of its spiritual interests, she made a mistake of such magnitude that she was never able to repair it. A weakness, natural enough to the average woman, overtook la Mère Angélique just at the moment when, outwardly, she was giving her strongest proof of strength. It was well for the health of the community that they should quit the marshy surroundings and overcrowded building at Port-Royal, but their spiritual emancipation far more than their physical well-being had been the motive of the change,

and it is strange that the first result of the escape should have been a fresh form of slavery.

Sebastien Zamet, Bishop of Langres,* was the type of ecclesiastic whose influence is calculated to have the most subtle spiritual dangers for a cloistered community of women. His personality was both attractive and inspiring. He seemed to diffuse a radiance of pious enthusiasm. He came to Angélique very soon after her arrival in Paris, sent by Mme. de Chantal, and he came with just such suggestions as were most likely at that moment to find an echo of keen sympathy in her breast. Neither she nor Mme. de Chantal detected his weakness. To him the outer trappings of religion, the forms, the symbols, the pomp and circumstance, that can at best be but the inadequate expression of adoration, had assumed a magnitude of importance out of proportion to his inner realization of essential truth ; but his ready phrases and real admiration for the standards of Port-Royal induced Angélique to give him her confidence and place the convent under his direction.

A coincidence in thought decided her on this precipitate step. Zamet, under the influence of a strong—though transitory—religious impression, conceived the idea of founding a monastery, with the special purpose of perpetual adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. In his first intention he imagined a brotherhood keeping a Rule of great austerity, but he changed speedily, as was his wont, and applied to Mme. de Chantal for advice in establishing a sisterhood instead. We have seen that Angélique in her doubts and difficulties had already instituted the practice of Perpetual Adoration, and therefore when Zamet was sent to her by the friend she most revered, she did not hesitate to hail him as the guide and helper she was seeking. Later, she was forced to recognize her error, and in her "Relation" of her life she gives the clue to her weakness thus : "I ought to say as a testimony to the justice of God, that I did not pray enough before forming my alliance with this Bishop. I entered into it very lightly, by the

* Sebastien Zamet was almoner to Marie de Medicis, and rose by Court favour. See Clemencet, part i. liv. 5.

prompting of my own will and instincts, without even taking counsel with la Mère Agnès."

But Zamet, though he proved a blind guide, was not consciously and intentionally a hypocrite; he was rather a man of impulse, swayed to and fro by sentiments and emotions, and without having any very solid foothold even at his best moments. Because he honestly believed in himself and the sincerity of his own intentions, he was more dangerous to Angélique than the most crafty of impostors. He had been the means of reforming the nuns of Tard (whose customs had been almost as dark a disgrace to their Order as those of Maubuisson), and he had aided them in just such an escape from the jurisdiction of Clairvaux as Angélique was effecting. His suggestion that the two communities should intermingle was hailed with enthusiasm by the sisters of Port-Royal, and immediately put in practice, Agnès and Marie-Claire interchanging with Geneviève le Tardif and another of the nuns of Tard, who brought with them many new ideas, and were disposed (under direction of Zamet) to follow the Rule of S. Augustine rather than that of S. Benedict. The individual influence exercised by Zamet over la Mère Angélique at this time was stronger than that which was ever assumed by de Sales or Saint-Cyran. De Sales had found and developed in her the qualities which reflected his own generous nature; she and Saint-Cyran were kindred spirits from the first; but Zamet caused her to assume a position that was inconsistent with her natural temper—his whole connection with her was disastrous to her peace, and cannot be considered without regret.

At his bidding she abandoned finally her cherished hope of taking refuge from the temptation of self-importance in some other convent, and by his influence at Court obtained a fresh charter for the Abbey of Port-Royal, that made the office of abbess dependent on triennial election. She herself resigned in 1630, and because in her enthusiasm she had impressed on all her sisters that everything that came from Tard was laudable, their choice at that first election fell on Geneviève le Tardif; and for three years it seemed that Port-Royal must be absolutely subject

to the rule of Zamet, to whom la Mère Geneviève was unquestioningly compliant. Meanwhile the scheme for the establishment of the new Order was rapidly developing, and Angélique —whose one ambition hitherto had been to divest herself of the responsibility of government—acceded to Zamet's wish that she should be its first Superior directly the election freed her from office at Port-Royal.

It seems, in fact, that she, in spite of the fundamental strength of her character, was suffering from the effects—that humanly appear almost inevitable—of the system of monotony enjoined by S. Bernard. It is a system that to be effective must be preserved unbroken. Natural instincts may be so bound as to leave the spirit free; by removing objects of anticipation or scope for imagination, the mental vision may be trained to gaze heavenward, but deviate for a moment from the rule, and the weakness of such pronounced spiritual coercion suggests itself. Angélique had had a scheme to accomplish, and by dint of unflinching resolution had accomplished it. But its accomplishment involved a complete change of surroundings, and of necessity broke through the routine of monotony. At the removal of that iron band, a nature that was naturally buoyant rose in reaction, and, all unwittingly, la Mère Angélique yielded as completely to the love of novelty, to the zest of experiment, as though she had been an impressionable school-girl.

The connection between Angélique and Zamet and the story of the establishment and failure of the Order of the Blessed Sacrament is peculiarly painful.* Directly and indirectly it was the most important episode in the whole history of Port-Royal. To Angélique it was to be the bitterest memory in her life, but to her as to the community it was the direct means whereby the support and guidance of Saint-Cyran reached them, and it may be that the suffering to which they had been subjected by the volatile temper of the Bishop of Langres was their best preparation for the spiritual exactions of his successor. For a time the thought of the new institution was the greatest solace that life

* Guilbert, "Mem. de Port-Royal," vol. ii. p. 243

offered to la Mère Angélique. After three years of government in the new convent she had, as we have seen, been called upon to give place to the first elected Abbess. In the history of her reform from its beginning there are continual reminders of her desire to be freed from her charge and placed in a subordinate position, and it is probable that she heard the result of the election with relief and thankfulness. But her candour is unfailing. "I would not attempt to vindicate my sex," she said once, "in that which touches their tendency to change, not believing it can be done, nor in relation to myself individually, for I acknowledge that in this I am especially defective." * Though she makes the avowal simply, we know that to a proud nature it is a difficult one. We can trace her motive in making it, for when she saw Geneviève le Tardif step into her place at Port-Royal, she learnt speedily that she also was prone to change her point of view.

The new Mother-Superior had come from Tard, but she had once been a novice under Angélique at Maubuisson. She had a great reputation among the pious for spirituality of mind, and was especially applauded by Zamet, but devotion of the kind which attracts applause had not been cultivated at Port-Royal, and there was no affinity between la Mère Geneviève and Angélique Arnauld. It was therefore the fate of the latter to stand by helpless and watch while the old order, so painfully and prayerfully established, was upset, and innovations, that seemed to her subversive of the real spirit of monasticism, were suggested and encouraged by the director she herself had chosen for the community. La Mère Geneviève did not scruple to announce her opinion that "the effect of their poverty, their simplicity, and their docility, had been to make the sisters all imbecile." Their bare cells and unbroken daily routine were not at all to her taste, thenceforward each one should be furnished with writing materials, and for the furtherance of their spiritual knowledge should be frequently permitted to converse with the Fathers of the Oratory. "And the church," writes Angélique, looking back on that hour

* See "Mem. contre Mgr. de Langres" (sequel to "Relation de la Mère Angélique").

of sharp experience, "was full of scents and drapery and flowers, and every day new acquaintances were made. Therewith the most abnormal austerity. Fasts on bread and water, the fiercest discipline, the most humiliating penances conceivable. Seeing one of these performed one day by a nun whom I did not hold in much esteem, I was greatly impressed, thinking that here was a miracle, but the same day at recreation-time, seeing her laughing as much as she had wept in the morning, I became altogether astonished, and concluded that all things were becoming merely a mockery. Yet it should be admitted that some of the best used these things willingly and turned them to their advantage. Those who were daintiest in appetite ate the scraps when others had finished. During their recreation they were required to mimic and turn each other into ridicule. I was often deeply distressed at all these things, but I said nothing, and when I asked myself secretly, 'What is the object of it all?' I answered myself, 'It is to lower my self-confidence.'"

In fact, the conditions of life at Port-Royal were all tending to the artificiality and emotionalism that Angélique specially deprecated, and it was impossible for her really to conceal her disapproval. "You are condemning us," Zamet said to her one day, possibly with irritation. "I say nothing," was Angélique's reply. "Your shadow condemns us then," was the Bishop's retort. The answer is sufficiently pathetic. "Send me away wherever you will, I will obey," she said.

Her co-operation was needed for the support of his new scheme, however, and he preferred to endure the silent reproach of her presence than to imperil his most cherished object, therefore she remained to face and endure spiritual discipline of so searching a kind that the imagination shrinks from dwelling on it. Truly, the humiliation she had so long desired was given to her during those years of impotence. Without sympathy, without encouragement, in the most complete isolation, she watched the undermining of all those influences among her sisters that seemed to her to make for righteousness. Nor were mortifications in a more personal sense denied her. She had ceased to be Abbess, and the

vow of obedience, for which she had so long contended as a principle, was for the first time required of her in practice. It is only by undeveloped suggestions here and there that we get an inkling of what obedience cost her. She had pictured herself—years before, it is true—as the little novice of her beloved Mme. de Chantal, yielding utterly to one whom she venerated as a saint. Perhaps even there reality would have made demands on which idealization had not calculated, but submission to a reputed saint was very different from submission to one who had once been under her own authority, but who had since imbibed ideas and standards which sober judgment and long experience completely disapproved. Surrender of the will, as implied by the monastic vow of obedience, under such circumstances as these is so comprehensive a reality that human nature must inevitably shrink, and it is evident that Angélique Arnauld, as she bent her neck to the yoke she had been wont to covet, missed altogether the joy she had expected, and perforce accepted in its place the anguish of broken self-esteem and disappointed hopes.

La Mère Geneviève seems to have been somewhat ruthless. Years afterwards Angélique told her nephew * how the nuns from Tard had used the letters de Sales had written to her, and she had treasured, to cover the jam-pots, and she (who had first enjoined community of goods) could not remonstrate. As Mother-Abbess also, she had admitted to the shelter of the convent three young girls whom she believed to be in grave moral peril in the world ; if the proceeding was irregular, the cause was good, and she had full powers. But la Mère Geneviève held other views. All funds available were needed for beautifying the chapel of Port-Royal, and she refused to provide food for extra mouths. Her predecessor's protégées must go. In accordance with the stern rule to which she bound herself, Angélique made no comment, but the wound went deep, the strain upon her was gradually wearing out her self-control, and in her quiet moments in the chapel she wept long and bitterly. La Mère Geneviève, though her mental balance had been a little shaken by her new acquisition of

* "Entretions" (sequel to "Relation") and Notes.

authority, was a generous and high-minded woman; she realized suddenly the pain she was inflicting, and relented, not indeed to the point of retaining her three unwelcome guests, but so that they were permitted to stay till other protectors had been found for them. Angélique—whose name and influence had made Port-Royal what it was—accepted the grudging benefit in the spirit of meekness, and was able to record that she had always maintained terms of unbroken friendship with her successor, though la Mère Geneviève did not scruple to make it evident that the restraint and austerity formerly practised were not to be maintained, and that the former Abbess herself must conform to the new régime of elaborate ornament and ceremonial, and to the worship of emotionalism enjoined by her revered director, Sebastien Zamet, Bishop of Langres. And, lest the Arnauld influence prove baffling, Agnès at Tard and Angélique in Paris were forbidden to hold communication. "We submitted," says Angélique, "and so were as much divided in spirit as in body."

But, through this period of sharp experience, Angélique solaced herself with hopes for the new institution, this Order for Adoration, which was to be so supremely for the greater glory of God. The idea of it, as first unfolded by Zamet, had been so strangely in accordance with her own feeling on the subject that was closest to her heart, that she would not allow herself to realize the degree to which, during the intervening years, Zamet himself had altered his point of view. The original petition to Rome for sanction gave the reason for the foundation in these words: "God will be glorified by the continual worship of the memorial of His love, and reparation will be offered for the sacrilege, profanity, irreverence, and outrage, of which unworthy Catholics and heretics are guilty daily towards the most holy Sacrament of the Altar." *

The prospect of this fresh consecration of herself was an infinite joy to Angélique, and the thought of the future softened the mortifications of the present. But another poignant experience awaited her. She watched eagerly (looking back in old age she is

* Lancelot, "Mem. de Saint-Cyran," vol. i. p. 379.

evidently astonished at the recollection of her own eagerness) while worldly difficulties were gradually overcome, money offered by one and another devout person, opposition in high places overruled, and the King at length persuaded to give his sanction and support. She herself was responsible for extorting consent from the Archbishop of Paris. The Pope * (distrustful of an innovation for which one individual alone would be answerable) had associated the Bishops of Sens and of Langses with M. de Paris as superiors, and the latter resented the arrangement so deeply that he never gave the new institution any real support, and it was only at the pressing instance of la Mère Angélique that he joined his sanction to the King's. Her part in its institution was more nominal than real. She was consulted, but it is plain that her advice was not taken. On the all-important point of the choice and design of a suitable building, we must of necessity recognize Zamet as prime mover. The house chosen was in the Rue Coquillière, Quai du Louvre; it abutted on a very noisy thoroughfare, it was hemmed in everywhere by houses so as to give no scope for possible enlargement, and it was in the very midst of the bustle and excitement of the world. All the objections against such a selection were obvious to la Mère Angélique, but Zamet's only reply to them was to rejoice that the house was near the Court, and thus might answer its purpose of alluring the worldly.

Once more Angélique had opportunity to test her faculty for self-repression, but it was with a heavy heart that in May, 1633,† six years after the migration from Port-Royal des Champs, she took possession of her new charge. "For I am forced to acknowledge," says she, "that by the mysterious judgment of God, this Bishop—who, when we first united with him, seemed to have no thought but of God and to be dead to the world—afterwards considered that this house could not prosper without many friends and without receiving persons of wealth and rank. He drew up the Constitutions, and ordained many rules that were just and good, but some were not either."

* The Papal Brief for the Institution was given by Urban VIII. in 1627.

† N. Fontaine, "Mem.," vol. i. p. 32.

By the Papal Bull Angélique Arnauld was appointed the first superior of the new Order, but Sebastien Zamet was its founder, and it soon became evident to them both that they held diametrically opposing views. She desired austerity. He insisted on grandeur. The church should be made the most beautiful in Paris, the services should be so arranged that Court ladies could attend them; matins—which the sisters of Port-Royal chanted at two in the morning—were to be said overnight, at eight; everything likely to suggest hardship and severity to the timorous must be kept in the background; and the nuns themselves were to be clothed in fine linen, were to wear a white serge dress with graceful folds and drooping sleeves, and a fine scarlet cross upon the tunic. Thus the simplicity of Port-Royal became a thing of the past, and the pure hopes of la Mère Angélique were trampled underfoot. Yet something remained to her, for the cloister was to be rigorously maintained, and the raison d'être of the new Order fostered the spirit of contemplation. To be consecrated to perpetual adoration was to her mind a crowning privilege, which even the idiosyncrasies of Zamet could not degrade. Before the altar she could find relief from the weight of petty difficulties, anxieties, and disappointments continually laid upon her, and no profession of faith, no asseveration of gratitude, could seem to her exaggerated if it witnessed to the efficacy of that Holy Mystery as a means of grace.

It seems a strange paradox that this spirit of trembling yet unhesitating faith should have been the first cause of real danger to the temporal welfare of Port-Royal. Not Angélique herself, but her sister Agnès, was directly responsible for the first accusations of heresy brought against the community, but the thoughts to which Agnès gave expression were approved by Angélique, and if the latter had not given her support to an institution that roused alarm and suspicion in the hearts of lovers of this world's good things, there would have been no inducement to notice or criticize the spiritual meditations of an obscure nun. The drama of the "Chapelet Secret" belongs to the age when it was enacted, an age of extremes, when moderation in word or thought had

become synonymous with indifference. The "Chapelet Secret" itself was the work of one who had never mixed with the world and whose mind was peculiarly susceptible to sensations of awe, and a very brief review of the circumstances attendant on its composition will show how truly the writer deprecated any thought of publicity.

We have seen how, in their first enthusiasm for the Bishop of Langres, the nuns from Port-Royal were eager to embrace the lines of thought to which he had trained the reformed community at Tard. The Bishop regarded Geneviève le Tardif as the type of what a nun should be, but the natural instincts of la Mère Geneviève were far more in accordance with Carmelite practices than with the Rule of S. Benedict. What may be termed the higher spirituality was cultivated by her, and the spirit of restraint fostered by Angélique (and approved by François de Sales) no longer found favour. It was the custom of Geneviève to recall her wandering thoughts in her hours of worship or meditation with pious ejaculations. Wishing to share the benefit she derived from this habit with her sisters, she took counsel with Zamet, and together they amplified the expressions of love and adoration that were so often on her lips, and composed a leaflet which they called "Le Chapelet du S. Sacrament." As the real worth of this practice of la Mère Geneviève lies obviously in its spontaneity, it is improbable that her leaflet proved of much real service to her sisters, and its only claim to remembrance is the suggestion that it gave to Agnès Arnauld.

The attainments to which Geneviève aspired were, in fact, the natural heritage of Agnès; that which the one cultivated, the other enjoyed without effort and almost unconsciously. It was evident to de Condren (who succeeded de Berulle as Superior of the Fathers of the Oratory) that she soared without effort to a level towards which others could only climb laboriously. The chaplet compiled by Geneviève and the Bishop of Langres suggested to the Oratorian a means by which he might satisfy himself regarding the capacity of one who was far too humble to display her gifts even to him. He bade her set down the theme of her meditations

when she knelt in adoration, and she—under obedience, but not willingly—complied. La Mère Agnès had a ready pen, and shared in the gift of expression that distinguished so many members of her family. What she wrote she solemnly declared came to her without reflection, whether by an illusion or by Divine inspiration she could not judge, but she herself had had no choice in her words or in the arrangement of her thoughts. The result was the pamphlet known to the world as "Le Chapelet Secret du S. Sacrament." In all good faith, and with no thought of possible publicity, la Mère Agnès endeavoured to represent the attitude of her mind towards the mysterious Presence upon the altar, dividing her meditation into sixteen heads, in allusion to the lapse of centuries since the sacrifice of Christ.

To understand it we must needs have trained ourselves to follow her into the realm of mysticism—to use the phrase of Jansenius, it is the work "d'une ame ennivrée de l'amour de Dieu." * The awful sacredness of the Blessed Sacrament was the thought that possessed her. She wrote not for the instruction of others, but to express the passionate reverence that overwhelmed all other sentiments. In sharp contrast to the indifference of the world, to the half-belief that wills to yield, yet will not accept the price that must be paid for yielding, we are confronted with the deep uncompromising faith of la Mère Agnès, and must needs declare it the ravings of religious mania, the incoherence of one "drunk with the love of God," or else be ready to acknowledge the grievousness of our own shortcoming. She was not—if any evidence of a time long past may be held reliable—a woman of unbalanced mind. She possessed much common sense and much discrimination, and was not devoid of humour. And she knew that her "Chapelet Secret" was not suited for the guidance of average minds. When it was written, she—by her own account—"sent it to my Lord Bishop of Langres, who then directed me, and he did me the honour to tell me that I should regard these thoughts of mine, not as my own, but as those of Jesus Christ in me. This it was that emboldened me to dwell

* Lancelot, "Mem. de Saint-Cyran," vol. i. p. 399.

upon these thoughts—which I should not have dared to do without this approbation—but I had never any idea of proposing them as a new method of devotion, still less that they should be used by others, or become in any way a system, either in this monastery or elsewhere, and this indeed has never happened. On the contrary, I can affirm that it was because I was so apprehensive of any publicity for my little meditation that I called it 'Le Chapelet Secret,' believing these thoughts that, as far as I knew, were given to me by God in prayer, ought not to be imparted for the use of others lest they might be misunderstood. And further, I declare that the impiety and blasphemy which some persons have sought in certain passages of my writing, persuading themselves that these were undermining the result of the love that God displays towards us, especially in the sacrament of the Eucharist and in the mystery of the Incarnation, have always been, and are, by the grace of God, very far from my thoughts, wishes and intentions." *

It was the fate of la Mère Agnès to become the scapegoat on whom the resentment of society was expended. The composure with which she defends her "Chapelet Secret" carries conviction, the subject of it to her was far too awe-full to be the theme for controversy or recrimination, and the wording and arrangement of her meditation are in themselves the surest evidence of her good faith. For the most part she uses the language of the mystic, and that is a tongue which cannot be comprehended without gradual apprenticeship. The sixteen headings are baffling at the outset. They are intended to represent the attributes of the Blessed Sacrament in such terms as *Inaccessibility*, *Incomprehensibility*, *Sufficiency*, etc. The ensuing meditation explains the relation of each particular term to the attitude of the soul towards the Sacred Mystery. Thus, under the heading of *Existence*, we find the following: "That Jesus Christ may possess the soul completely; that He will not suffer the creature to exist; that He will be all that He can be, and overwhelm all else as the sun obliterates all other light; that He should absorb all being, and the end of His

* "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," vol. i. No. 157.

coming be for Himself and not the advantage of the soul that receives Him."

That is the mysticism of Mme. Guyon in her purest flights, and as such is not fare for the uninitiated, the natural result of its perusal being to intensify a sense of utter unworthiness, and possibly alienate the faithful from the gift of Divine tenderness. It was in this light that the humble pamphlet was generally regarded when it became common property, and even those who sympathized with it shared with the writer the apprehension that it would prove dangerous.

It had been written in 1627, but only imparted to a carefully chosen few, and there is conflicting evidence as to the circumstances that made it public. In all probability Mme. de La Tremouille, Abbess of Lys, was responsible. Her monastery had been reformed under the influence of Port-Royal,* and she regarded la Mère Agnès with the utmost veneration. The "Chapelet Secret" was shown to her when she was on a visit to Port-Royal de Paris. In her enthusiasm she showed it to de Bellegarde, the Bishop of Sens, and he, actuated by jealousy towards the Bishop of Langres and a general dislike to all who bore the name of Arnauld, considered it his duty to lay it before the Sorbonne. It was censured unhesitatingly by eight learned doctors as being "full of extravagance, impertinence, error, blasphemy, and impiety, tending to destroy the method of prayer instituted by Jesus Christ."

This censure, dated June 18, 1633,† is evidence that Port-Royal was already regarded with suspicion; it was the first open blow aimed at the community, and as such is important, though in itself the controversy that raged about "Le Chapelet Secret" is perhaps the most futile in the whole history of the Church.

The sudden publicity given to a subject that she had regarded as exempt from all possibility of criticism took la Mère Angélique by surprise, and it came at a time when her outlook in many

* La Sœur Anne Eugenie, fourth daughter of M. Arnauld, carried on the work of reform at Lys from 1623–1626. See Clemencet, part i. liv. 4.

† Guilbert, "Mem. de Port-Royal," vol. ii. p. 401.

directions was difficult and gloomy. Her authority in the new institution was very different from what it had been at Port-Royal. The Bishop of Langres loved detail, and no regulation was too petty for his supervision. Moreover, as has been said, he had a great love of display, and was ready to justify its gratification on a plea that suggests a speculating aptitude. The grandeur of the surroundings would, he averred, attract the rich to the Rue Coquillière, and their instincts of piety and generosity would be quickened at one and the same time. In some degree he was right. The novelty of the Order, the interest attaching to la Mère Angélique, and the insinuating personality of the Bishop himself, did stir the ladies of the Court to unwonted interest. But the Archbishop refused to allow sermons to be preached in the convent chapel, and Angélique resolutely suppressed all practices tending to emotionalism. Therefore it was soon evident that there was more excitement to be found elsewhere, and the crowd of richly dressed worshippers dwindled to very small dimensions without having replenished the empty coffers of the convent. The Mother-Abbess found herself pressed by debts which had been contracted in opposition to her judgment, and burdened by constitutions which she could not approve. The Rule of the new Order seemed to her to be too lax, and her sense of its privilege being as great as that felt by la Mère Agnès, she would fain have testified to it by a system of self-renunciation more stringent than she had ever hitherto preached or practised. Instinctively, moreover, she knew that Zamet, to whom she owed her difficulties, was failing her. He was weary of the anxiety his venture had brought upon him, its novelty was gone, and the enthusiasm that gave birth to it had long been a thing of the past. When his fervour had evaporated, he had been sustained by hopes that he should win for himself a prominence in the Church and in society that would repay all his labour, but instead he received both criticism and censure, and was growing afraid of the jealousy evinced by De Bellegarde, Bishop of Sens. It is pitiful that la Mère Angélique, struggling, as she always was, after a vision of perfection, and desiring continually that which

should be most to the glory of God, should have fallen a victim to this man of passing impulses, and jeopardized the ideal of a lifetime in the hands of one who proved as unstable as water. Yet the spirit of adoration could not really be disturbed by the vacillations of Sebastien Zamet, and his pusillanimity was destined to be of more service to Port-Royal than any of the higher qualities he had once displayed.

Many eyes had been attentive to the developments of his scheme, and it was apparent to others besides la Mère Angélique that the community could not look to the founder to guide them through the tempest that was raging round them. The grave dangers of their position could not be ignored. De Bellegarde, delighted with the decision of the Sorbonne, despatched the "Chapelet Secret" to Rome in the hope of confounding his rival yet further; and Père Binet, a prominent Jesuit, thought it worth while to publish a pamphlet against it, wherein he insinuated that it was in fact the work of Zamet himself, and that the nuns of the new Order were saturated with the mystic and heretical theory propounded by la Mère Agnès, and were intended to be its exponents to society. Angélique, on hearing this report, sought for a copy of her sister's meditation, that she might satisfy herself as to the reality of its danger, and it is characteristic of the utter futility of the accusation, that it should have been impossible to produce one either in the Rue Coquillière or the Faubourg S. Jacques, the original having gone to Maubuisson with la Mère Marie des Anges some years previously*—a circumstance that might at least have satisfied the alarmists that the novices of Port-Royal were not nourished on the mystic utterances of la Mère Agnès.

But, though the "Chapelet Secret" was hardly to be found in Paris, the fact remained that a copy of it had gone to Rome, and that the welfare of the Order on which Angélique had concentrated all the deepest ardour of her soul seemed to depend upon the verdict of his Holiness. All around her were tokens of threatening disaster. She knew that she had been weak when

* Lancelot, "Mem. de Saint-Cyran," vol. i. p. 393.

strength was needed, and yielded to Zamet when conscience bade her resist him. She knew that her embarrassments, though incurred at his suggestion, might have been avoided had she stood firm; that all the grandeur of their habit and the elaborate decoration of their chapel detracted from, instead of enhancing, the dignity of the Sisters of the Holy Sacrament; that the shortness of their office, the lightness of their labour, the refinement of their surroundings, was not in accordance with the true spirit of monasticism; and that their way of life tended to foster emotional aptitudes, till self-consciousness obscured the reality of their aspirations. She knew that she had possessed the experience that should have been their shield, and she believed that the institution planned, in all sincerity, for the greater glory of God, had made a false start, and was on the brink of utter ruin, for which she would be responsible.

In loneliness of soul and bitterness of spirit she reviewed the past, seeing in herself nothing but sin, in her work nothing but failure; and face to face with despair, she prayed that the Hand of God might be stretched forth to lead her, that her erring footsteps might no longer stray unguided. It was at this moment, when she seemed to be near the limit of strength and courage, that the figure of Saint-Cyran (and therewith the strongest influence that ever touched her destiny) approached her from the dim crowd of those whom she had encountered during her years of office. And thenceforward the fortunes of the community for good or evil were altered, and the religion of Jansenius and his friend, the religion that means awe rather than love, was so implanted at Port-Royal, that the impression of austerity, spiritual as well as physical, has become inseparable from its very name.

CHAPTER V

THE ABBÉ DE SAINT-CYRAN

In Philippe de Hauranne, the celebrated Abbé de Saint-Cyran, we come into contact with one of those astonishing personalities who leave an indelible impression on their age, not by reason of any work that they accomplished or even attempted, but because men and women could not approach them and remain unaffected, whether the effect was to their profit or their hurt. Again and again, when that stern figure loomed on the stage of human lives the development of the drama altered, often with inartistic suddenness, and individual characters were forced by a power, at once merciless and irresistible, into courses that seem entirely at variance with their natural aptitudes.

When the fortunes and reputation of Saint-Cyran became welded finally and irretrievably with those of Port-Royal, his convictions were already firmly fixed, and, in one of his unbending temper, no modification or expansion could be looked for. It is, therefore, with the man as he was when he became a definite factor in the life of la Mère Angélique that we have to deal, and the detail of his previous history,* of his studious youth, his close friendship with Jansenius, Bishop of Yprès, and the exhaustive labour which they had jointly consecrated to the writings of S. Augustine, need not concern us here. For Saint-Cyran, as Port-Royal knew him, was not the product of circumstances or environment ; he might have developed to be what he was, and impressed himself as ruthlessly on the imagination of his contemporaries in any other age or among any other surroundings. It

* See Claude Lancelot, "Mem. de M. de Saint-Cyran," 2 vols.

"SAINT-CYRAN."

(From an engraving in the British Museum.)

[*To face page* 110.

is the man himself, not the particular theological opinions that he promulgated, who makes so strong a claim on our attention; and, putting aside his relation to the controversial questions of the day and ignoring his claim to reputation as a theologian, it must suffice us to see him as he was in intercourse with other men and women; for, as his life neared its close, the value of his personal touch far exceeded all that he could accomplish by study and by the writings that were intended to interpret the thought of others. He was, by precept and by practice, by definite teaching, as well as by the influence of a life in which each detail and every utterance seem to have been extraordinarily consistent, the fittest exponent of the severe religion, that creed of fear and trembling, which became so inextricably interwoven with the experiences of the nuns and hermits of Port-Royal.

His youth had been devoted to arduous and almost uninterrupted study. By this means he had acquired a profound knowledge of the conditions and the spirit of the early Christians, and when, in process of time, he raised his eyes from the printed page to look around him at his fellow men and women, and recalled his mind from spiritual meditation to reflect on what he saw, he was appalled by the prevalence of iniquity in the Church and in the world; and thenceforward his absorbing desire was to bring about reform in the hearts of men and in the methods of the Church. He saw about him a generation that was nominally Christian, and he knew that, for the guidance of Christians amid their various and pressing temptations, the Church had confided to her servants the duty of admonishing and exhorting sinners and of giving absolution to the penitent. This ordinance he believed to be the chief bulwark of her power over souls, and he was overwhelmed with dismay as he realized that the authority thus transmitted had become, in unworthy hands, the cause of her weakness and of the spiritual degradation of the masses. The evil was well described by Bossuet a few years later, and his graphic phrases suggest as keen a sense of the guilt of the offenders as animated Saint-Cyran himself. "They are possessed," said he, "by a melancholy and unnatural tolerance, by a murderous

sort of pity, that causes them to provide cushions for the elbows of penitents, to conceal the evil of their passions, that they may humour their vanity and encourage them in their pretended ignorance. . . . They confuse heaven and earth; they unite Christ with Belial; they join old cloth with new, against the express injunction of the Gospel, the rags of worldliness with the royal purple: such confusion disgraces the spirit of piety, and dishonours the simplicity, the truth, and absolute purity of Christianity." *

This, which to Bossuet was only one among many subjects of regret, was the idea that absorbed Saint-Cyran and inspired him to adopt as the object of his life the practical exposition of the doctrine of penitence. Possessed by a profound sense of the natural sinfulness of man, which was partly the result of his early studies, he believed that the only hope of salvation lay in a repentance that, from its very nature, involved renunciation of all those habits of indulgence that might give occasion for future falling. From the first he was absolutely consistent. He believed that the times were evil, and that the servants of the Church betrayed their trust; and he seems to have been confident, in a manner which is not in some natures incompatible with real humility, that he was the bearer of a message to his generation, which should prove the remedy to a prevailing ill. He and Jansenius had hoped originally to reach society by allying themselves with those Fathers of the Oratory whose recent institution by Cardinal de Berulle made them particularly influential in a novelty-loving age. But, though Père de Condren, their Superior, was at one period on intimate terms with Saint-Cyran, it soon became evident that the uncompromising practices of the latter could not prudently be adopted by the Oratorians, and Saint-Cyran, realizing that it would be impossible for him to fulfil his design unless he obtained complete independence, found himself at a loss for the flock which it was his purpose to guide along a steep and narrow way.

At this juncture arose the scandal of "Le Chapelet Secret." It

* "Oraisons Funèbres," Nicolas Cornet, Œuvres, ed. 1840, vol. viii. p. 804.

had been so fostered by the enemies of de Langres that half Paris was chattering of it. "So did this persecution spread," wrote Angélique, "that even the Court took part, and we were proclaimed as heretics, as visionaries; some went so far as to say we practised sorcery." Paris, in fact, chanced at that moment to lack a theme for gossip, and Port-Royal, in spite of Sebastien Zamet and la Mère Geneviève, had not shown a proper solicitude for the mildly pious proclivities of Court ladies or of city dames, and therefore easily became a favourite topic for the wagging of malicious tongues. All Zamet's hopes of exalting his own reputation by means of Port-Royal and its offshoot in the Rue Coquillière were thus completely overturned, and his ruling desire thenceforward was to escape from a position that had become precarious, even at the risk of forfeiting his influence in the institution he had founded. It was ordained that he should turn to Saint-Cyran, whose acquaintance he had lately made, in the hope of shifting his responsibilities on to shoulders far better able to support them. As has been said, la Mère Angélique and the Abbé de Saint-Cyran had already held some intercourse. He was the friend of d'Andilly, her eldest brother; he had preached at Port-Royal des Champs at Ascension-tide some years before, and in subsequent conversation had told her, as she relates, "that he had seen many Abbesses reform their monasteries, but he had seen very few reform themselves, but that I was of the number. And truly by the grace of God I greatly desired to be so."

The fleeting acquaintance resulted in deep mutual respect, but, though at that time Angélique was without any guidance but her own discretion, it did not occur to her to appeal to him for spiritual assistance, "and indeed," says she, "he gave me no opening for doing so, for that was not by any means his habit. He never asked questions, and only replied to those directly asked of him."

In the days when Angélique made her somewhat sensational exit from Maubuisson and transferred her troop of novices to Port-Royal, Saint-Cyran wrote* to tell her how greatly he

* Dated from Chartres, July 4, 1623.

applauded her self-devotion and that of her sisters in sharing a provision that was barely sufficient for themselves, and she, knowing the esteem in which d'Andilly held him,* acknowledged his praise with gratitude. These links, light as they were, prepared her to receive him with confidence. She was sick at heart with disappointment and anxiety and the sordid pressure of financial embarrassment. She had ceased to hope for any help from Zamet, and was surprised when he suggested that Saint-Cyran should be taken into their confidence and shown the constitutions of the new Order. A moment's reflection revealed the possible danger of this new departure, and she warned the Bishop that Saint-Cyran, though he would never ask to see these constitutions, would be perfectly frank in criticism if they were shown to him. His reply amazed her as much as the original suggestion. He said: "Have no fears. Show them to him. I wish him to be absolute master."

Saint-Cyran's view of Zamet's arrangements coincided with Angélique's, but he confined his criticism to that which could be rectified. He insisted especially that the excessive observance of the cloister intended by the founder should be modified, for, according to the Constitution, a nun was to be buried within the convent, and, as no man was admitted beyond the grille, the dead must needs be laid to rest without the assistance of a priest—an instance of that exaggeration of the letter to the detriment of the spirit which is peculiarly characteristic of Zamet. Saint-Cyran's moderation was well-timed. The bishop yielded to every suggestion, and further expressed his desire to consign the whole charge of the Order of the Blessed Sacrament, its future regulation and development, and the direction of the eleven members then within its walls, to the hands of his critic. Saint-Cyran did not grasp at the offered opportunity with undue precipitation. He was deliberate in all things, and careful to exhort others to like deliberation. "Never undertake anything," he was wont to say, "unless you are absolutely assured that it is the will of God. . . .

* Arnauld d'Andilly was intimate with Saint-Cyran in 1620. See Clemencet, "Hist.," part i. liv. 4.

Even good works are not pleasing to God unless they are such as He has required of us." * Accordingly he deliberated long, but even while he hesitated he wrote to the community reminding them of their great responsibility in being the first members of this new and most sacred Order, and every word he wrote was applauded by Sebastien Zamet, whose hopes of emancipation from a charge that had proved so dangerous augmented daily.

That Saint-Cyran might be fully initiated into the conditions that threatened danger, Angélique was bidden to provide him with a copy of the "Chapelet Secret," which she did with some apprehension, having been forced to realize that her sister's work was susceptible of interpretations not intended by the writer. It was with relief that she received his verdict. He spent four hours examining it, and wrote, she says, "the same evening at eight o'clock, that having read and studied it without prejudice, intending to condemn it should it merit condemnation, or to commend it if that should prove its due, he assured me that it contained nothing that was against the Catholic faith, or that could not easily be defended, and that he wished to tell me so immediately to put me out of anxiety."

Thenceforward he became the recognized defender of the Chapelet,† and the war of pamphlets continued to rage around it. In due course the decision of the Pope arrived, to the effect that it was not to be placed on the Index, but was best suppressed, as it might be dangerous to the ignorant—an opinion which, it may be noticed, endorsed that of the writer herself, but was not calculated to silence controversy.

Sebastien Zamet was able to congratulate himself on the successful accomplishment of an ingenious scheme, to which he gave the crowning touch when he discovered that the affairs of his diocese claimed his presence, and that he must quit Paris without delay. It would appear that for the time his ruling desire was the shifting of his responsibilities, and in his mind the impulse of the moment was apt to expel every other consideration.

* See Besoigne, "Hist. de Port-Royal," vol. iii.: "Esprit de Saint-Cyran."

† See Clemencet, "Hist.," part i. liv. 5.

He left Saint-Cyran in possession of the field, therefore, without regret, and to Angélique, the person most affected, the change was welcome. "I began then to see," she says, referring to the coming of Saint-Cyran, "as I had not seen before, that he was as saintly and as spiritual as he was learned."

It is the fashion among many writers, who do not withhold their admiration from Angélique Arnauld, to deplore the fatal impulse which caused her to yield the direction of herself and of the community of Port-Royal so completely to the influence of the Abbé de Saint-Cyran. Without examining whether that influence was really inimical to the welfare of the Port-Royalists (a question which, unless we are provided with a special revelation of the alternative conditions, it is impossible to answer satisfactorily), it seems to us that the slow development of her life and character led her inevitably towards Saint-Cyran, or to some other, if such a one might have been found, of like conviction and stern purpose. By reason of the system of the Church as then existing, it would, it is true, have been impossible for her, unaided, to inaugurate alone just such conditions as resulted from Saint-Cyran's influence, but it must be recognized that the experience of many years, culminating in the bitter ordeal through which she had passed since she arrived in Paris, required some consummation such as was reached when she deliberately accepted the iron laws imposed by him. It would be easy for many persons, regarding their own past lives dispassionately, to form thereon a creed of temporal predestination, and to negative the popular assumption of free will; and the life-story of Angélique Arnauld is peculiarly fitted to afford support to such a theory, for we are tempted to see in it that thread of an inexorable fate, that shadow of the inevitable, from which it is a human instinct to shrink in terror. In fact, Saint-Cyran did not need to make a place for himself at Port-Royal; his place was waiting for him, and had been waiting ever since Angélique came back so full of ardour from Maubuisson and instilled her searching laws of sacrifice into her sisters' hearts. The erratic guidance of Sebastien Zamet, though its acceptance provided la Mère Angélique with

lifelong occasion for remorse, was in itself but an ineffective episode in the history of the community. And Saint-Cyran, while he may justly be regarded as the type and exponent of the spirit of Port-Royal, did not create that spirit; it had been called to life by the voice of Angélique, and had grown and developed among the nuns, who revered and loved her long before the name of the celebrated scholar was connected with their community.

It should be remembered that it was in her character as Superior of the new Order, not as Abbess of Port-Royal, that la Mère Angélique first welcomed the direction of Saint-Cyran, and at first he refused to become director to her nuns. That was an office which he would not accept without much deliberation, wherein he showed evident wisdom; for his exercise of it was so stringent that only the few whose aspirations after a higher life were very deeply rooted, possessed the resolution necessary to respond to his demands. Such aspirations were not rare, however, at Port-Royal, and before a year had passed Saint-Cyran consented to hear confessions in the new monastery. He had prepared the way by preaching frequently in the parlour (no preaching was permitted in the chapel as a result of the discontent of the Archbishop), and here a few priests and one or two devout ladies were permitted to be present; but the preacher had no desire to swell the numbers of his audience; he was well aware that the message he desired to deliver could be received only by the few.

Many of the personal records of Saint-Cyran suggest the idea that the impression resulting from a first encounter with him was unfavourable. This was the case more especially among women, and was a natural result of their experience. It was at that time the policy of the Jesuits—deliberately adopted as the only means of gaining a hold among a generation sorely in need of spiritual guidance—to smooth the path of repentance, that those who might have grace to seek it should not be daunted at the outset. The monks, as we have already noted, were for the most part extremely easy-going, suiting their direction to the attitudes and inclinations of their penitents, and exhibiting a generous tolerance

towards such sins as were most prevalent. Even the new Order of Oratorians imbibed this spirit of compromise—a spirit that finds some sort of justification in the apparent hopelessness of attacking wickedness so widespread and so deep-rooted as that which society presented to their gaze; and Père de Condren himself incurred the rebuke of Saint-Cyran for giving absolution to Monsieur, brother of the King, at a time when he was openly living in scandalous and flagrant sin.* Contempt for the Church and disregard of her sacraments was the usual result of this deplorable laxity, but for some shrinking souls the system had its uses, and they advanced under gentle and persuasive guidance with a courage which severity would have dispelled. Saint-Cyran's views, however, admitted of no such considerations. Those who came to him, and whom he accepted as a charge from God, might never hope for any humouring of individual weakness. Sin was sin—intolerable in the sight of God, whatever extenuating circumstances might be put forward to cloke it before the eyes of men—and he could not rest satisfied till he had dragged out the very root of it for judgment. He was aided by a marvellous gift of penetration, which may be fitly described in the realistic words of a great critic† as "Un inexorable scalpel qui fouille dans des chairs réputées saines et ne s'arrête qu'au fond," and it is well to realize that a close study of him and of his methods is necessarily repugnant to average sensibilities. For although Saint-Cyran was a learned theologian, a man of letters and a notable preacher, it is in his office as confessor and director of souls that he claims attention, and it was in that capacity chiefly that he made his mark upon the age. From the year 1631, when Zamet made his graceful exit from the scene of his difficulties, the inner history of Port-Royal is a study in the system of direction, and judgment on it depends almost entirely on our opinion of the individuals exercising the power thus assumed. But it cannot be admitted that the complete surrender of la Mère Angélique was in any way a sign of weakness. If we

* Lancelot, "Mem. de Saint-Cyran," vol. i. p. 154.
† A. Vinet.

consider that she was a devout daughter of the Church, it is easy to follow the sequence of thought that led her to acceptance of Saint-Cyran and his theories. When he came to her she was Superior of the Order of Adoration, and her position is in itself sufficient testimony to her deep-rooted faith in the Blessed Sacrament. The main strength of sacerdotalism is based on the office of the priest in connection with that mystery, but this element of mystery (inseparable from the whole sacramental theory) is hardly less evident in that of absolution, and in this case the personal relation between recipient and administrant is calculated to impart to the latter an authority to which he could not attain by other means. Such conditions are not obvious to eyes accustomed to the Protestant point of view, but any true understanding of the spirit of Port-Royal involves their acceptance, or, at the least, that those who challenge sacerdotalism and refuse belief to all that concerns mystery and miracle in the Catholic Church, should be prepared to admit—in the words of the Protestant critic and divine already quoted—that the "belief of the sincere Catholic envelops him in an atmosphere, of which those of another creed can hardly hope to form the least conception." *

To la Mère Angélique the possibility of producing her well-marked line of credence to the further point involved by reliance in direction was peculiarly welcome. Since she had lost the guidance of de Sales it had been impossible for her to give her confidence unreservedly; even Sebastien Zamet, though he had swept her off her usual strong foothold of common sense, can hardly, in his best moments, have brought her ease of mind. But, we repeat, she and Port-Royal had waited for the coming of Saint-Cyran, and were the readier for his coming for every year of waiting. If it was his mission to give a new interpretation of the Church's meaning in instituting the office of director, it was the part of Port-Royal, in accepting him and his successors, to testify before the world that that office should be regarded as a thing apart, "a ministry within the ministry," † for which only

* A. Vinet, "Etudes Litt. Française," vol. iii.: art. "Port-Royal."
† See ibid.

a few were eligible. And the successors of Saint-Cyran were well-fitted to wear his mantle. M. Singlin, the first among them, was summoned—when his leader was imprisoned—to take the whole responsibility of this arduous charge. He seems to have been devoid of scholarship, and was, therefore, the more capable of giving special proof that "the knowledge of the truths of God and of His will is the fruit of pureness of heart." * In process of time he found a worthy helper in M. de Saçi, third son of Mme. Le Maistre and nephew of la Mère Angélique, a man whose humility was in proportion to the greatness of his learning. Others there were, less notable but hardly less worthy to sustain the high tradition established by Saint-Cyran, which, indeed, was never allowed to lapse till Port-Royal itself had ceased to be.

The beginning of the movement was made when the little band of nuns in the Rue Coquillière besought Saint-Cyran to hear their confessions, and convinced him that they were ready to yield themselves to his guidance. Sebastien Zamet had not returned to Paris, and it is not likely that he realized the work that his successor was accomplishing; but la Mère Angélique, though she saw that the new influence would completely supersede and contradict the old, was perfectly loyal in her conduct and reported fully to the Bishop every fresh step taken by Saint-Cyran. She withheld, however, one may imagine, any expression of her own ardent thanksgiving, for she knew that the realization of her dreams for the institution would give no pleasure to its founder, and it was nothing less than the realization of her dreams which she saw growing under the touch of the new director. The nuns whom she had chosen had all disappointed her; they had developed aptitudes for religious excitement and emotionalism of a kind which she could not reconcile with the true sentiment of worship, and it was with astonishment that she noted the change in their demeanour after the departure of Sebastien Zamet. Saint-Cyran's conquest of them, though by no means immediate, was complete; he made no advances to win their confidence, he was unchangeably severe, a man of few words and forbidding

* Fontaine, "Mem.," vol. i. p. 254.

aspect. But week after week he spoke in the convent parlour, giving them new food for thought, new inspiration to self-restraint, new light to reawaken the spirit of adoration, until at length they were completely subjugated, and he—satisfied that that first stage was past—accepted them as charges entrusted to him by God.

Thenceforward the pettiness and jealousy that had crept in among them with the love of outward show was banished, and once more Angélique could breathe the atmosphere of simplicity wherein alone she could breathe freely. The chief aim inculcated by Sebastien Zamet had been the preservation of such a graceful and reverend demeanour that noble ladies might desire to join the Order. The rule of life laid down by Saint-Cyran differed fundamentally; it had no relation to the world, but was concerned solely with meditation on the lives of Christ's disciples and the imitation of their spirit. Like them the sisters of the Blessed Sacrament must live in unity among themselves, must be separate from the world, and seek continual guidance from the Word of God.

Once more the silence in which Angélique delighted became a constant practice. "We learnt," wrote one of the sisters, "that silence must not be idle, we must needs use it for speech with God and listening to Him; in such wise that be we never so busy we need not lose the spirit of prayer and meditation, and that the more silent we were among ourselves the more we might look for intercourse with God." * Such fervour as this suggests must needs be voluntary, a constant search after the presence of God cannot be matter for coercion. Therefore his insistence on it is proof not of the severity of Saint-Cyran, but of his deep understanding of his office. La Mère Angélique, indeed, was wont to testify with vehemence that the popular impression of Saint-Cyran as a type of the implacable and severe director was mistaken. "It should be realized," says she, "that he used no force to produce a sense of penitence, nor did he insist on great mortification or austerity. But by the grace of God he was given the power of bringing home to the hearts of men the love

* Besoigne, "Hist. de Port-Royal," vol. iii.: "Relation de Mme. de Ligny."

and reverence they owed to God so strongly that a great sorrow for having offended Him sprang up, and therewith so great a desire to be reconciled that they straightway desired to do more than he required. His ardent care for souls involved no pressure on them; but rather inspired hope and consolation in the thought that God had wished to heal them by sending them so good a physician, for he dealt with them in uprightness and charity and by no methods that were either severe or over-scrupulous." Doubtless it was true that the exaggerations perpetrated by Saint-Cyran's penitents, of which the world was wont to chatter, were most often the indirect result of his influence, so that he could not justly be held responsible for them in detail; but there are instances of his dealings with certain individuals which convict him, in defiance of la Mère Angélique, of making demands that overstepped all bounds of moderation, and justify those enemies of his who fixed on him as the original of Bossuet's celebrated description of the violent confessor, who "holds a conscience in unjust captivity, will tolerate no weakness, and pursues it continually with the thought of hell and the threatenings of damnation. He discovers new sins in all directions and crushes poor human nature to despair by adding to the yoke that God imposes." *

Doubtless the true judgment on Saint-Cyran lies somewhere midway betwixt the verdict of friend and enemy, but Angélique, in whose mind he figures always by that appellation which she and her friends were wont to use in writing of him, "le serviteur de Dieu," made no attempt to conceal the facts of his intercourse with Port-Royal or with the sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. She must have known that many, differing from him, would dare to blame him, but she felt towards him that supreme and rare respect that desires to hide nothing and to palliate nothing, deeming its object to have reached too high a level to be smirched by human condemnation. Thus her personal records and the records of Port-Royal give us the truth about him, and therewith a revelation of character, of subtle combinations in indomitable courage and trembling weakness on the one hand, of relentless

* "Panégyrique de S. François de Sales." Œuvres, vol. vii. p. 145.

severity that was strangely interwoven with a matchless gift of sympathy on the other, that compensates for the offence to the instinct of reserve and seemliness resulting from disclosures so intimate and so detailed.

Looking back in old age on that strange turning-point of her life when Saint-Cyran came into it, Angélique's ruling impulse was to preserve as close a picture of the man as memory would furnish, and if, incidentally, she must depict herself in a humiliating aspect, such a consideration had no power to deter her. She had rejoiced at the generous courage with which her sisters accepted the direction of that unflinching guide; but she herself hung back. In proportion to the depth of her spiritual life was the difficulty with which she assimilated a fresh impression; in proportion also to the purity of her aspirations was the degree of her humility. "I was the last to make my confession," she says; "for I shrank from the uprightness of this servant of God, although I reverenced him greatly, and, ever since God called me by the sermon of the Capuchin, had cherished just such an ideal of real devotion and religious life. For I had seen then the necessity of true obedience, of subduing the flesh and all inclinations of the senses; I had seen the blessing of true poverty, and God gave me so great a desire for these virtues, that my one thought was to obtain the means of practising them. But my folly and light-mindedness, and also my lack of real help in responding to this first gift of grace and finding the means of following its summons, led me to much unfaithfulness and many faults, which caused me agonies of remorse. Then I would check myself, and then immediately relapse into my former failing. And thus it was that I dreaded that which I really needed and desired most: namely, the guidance—strong, holy, and inspired—of this servant of God. I regarded it as involving the destruction of my will, my own discretion, and my private judgment, which I had managed to retain almost unchallenged until then; and I did not wish to deceive him, nor to misuse the benefit I had longed for and that God now granted me, in sending me one whose righteousness and strength of character dominated

me. Moreover, I had at all times great difficulty in confessing, and it was greater before him than before any other. His great wisdom and his saintliness made me fearful of revealing to him so much folly and such great unfaithfulness and sin. And so great was my difficulty that I told him at first that, although God had given me a real desire to reveal to him the condition of my soul, in the belief that he would aid me to cast off the burden which weighed on me so terribly, it seemed to me nevertheless beyond my power to make my confession, unless God granted me some special grace, for which I humbly asked that he would pray.

"At first he said that I must not force myself, and, as I had told him I had made more than one general confession, there was no need to make another; but this did not satisfy me, because, seeing how admirable was his direction, God renewed my desire to obey the first impulses He had been pleased to give me towards the life of the true religious; and I was then under conditions more favourable than they had ever been, being free of my charge as Abbess, and being only temporary Superior of the Order of the Blessed Sacrament. Therefore I had a deep desire to seize the chance of grace that God had given me when I met with this saintly man, and to yield myself wholly to his guidance, regardless of my own will and judgment, which had led me into so many sins. And to this end I felt he must have close knowledge of my sins, and, if it had been possible to me to show them to him as I saw them myself, I should have thought myself most fortunate. But words failed me, and I could not convey that which I saw myself with so much anguish.

"In fact, though our first interview in this connection lasted two hours, I could only tell him my vague desires, and assure him repeatedly of my resolution to obey him as God required me to do, beseeching him at the same time to exact from me unsparingly whatever God might suggest to him as being required of me. A few days later he returned, and I think his prayers had won for me the strength to overcome my excessive shrinking from confession, for I was able then to do it without great difficulty. And

afterwards I was in such peace that I seemed to myself to be another being, and, although it was God's will that I should still feel sorrow for my sins, I know that I had never before been conscious of so deep a sense of comfort."

Unconsciously, in that crude record of her own experience, Angélique touches on one of the problems inseparable from Catholic practices. She shows us the human instinct and the spiritual aspiration at war; her better impulses courting humiliation while her nature recoiled from it. But the battle-ground was essentially human. It was not the confession of her sin before God, its realization and the bitterness of penitence, from which she shrank, but its acknowledgment to Saint-Cyran himself, on account of "his great wisdom and his saintliness." That ingenuous avowal serves as a clue to much in Saint-Cyran's dealings that otherwise would not be easy to unravel. He had detected the human note prevailing, even where there was real devotion, and he knew that it rang false. It had been echoed by priests of saintly life, as much as by those who sought deliberately for personal influence. The Church had made no effort to silence it, and the ears of the faithful were so used to it as to have grown unconscious. But Saint-Cyran, in the fierce energy of his search for God, believed that priest-craft was responsible for the degradation of so-called Christians. A priest might claim reverence as a servant of God, but not for his individual possession of wisdom or of piety.* This was the principle in defence of which he took his stand before the world, and it was this which prompted him to probe and cauterize so pitilessly when he descried the common weakness in souls that, to the world, seemed almost spotless. "Behind Bossuet I see the Church," says a learned critic;† "behind Saint-Cyran I see nothing, nothing but truth."

The phrase indicates the isolation which claims the glances of observant eyes; and whether or no we are prepared to accept a man's conception of the truth as just, we must needs accord our tribute of admiration to the courage that could face single-

* Besoigne, "Hist. de Port Royal," vol. iii.; "Esprit de Saint-Cyran."
† A. Vinet.

handed an array of power such as Saint-Cyran deliberately defied when he threw down his gauntlet and challenged the champions of casuistry to meet him if they dared. In fact, he, who aspired to reform his generation, had direct dealing with but a score or so of men and a community of nuns; yet his work, through them, reached out as far as though Sunday after Sunday half Paris had listened spellbound to his teaching. For truth, once given form, becomes imperishable, and, though its growth was marked by agony such as we shrink from contemplating, it did at last take shape before the eyes of men, uplifted by the hands of those unflinching devotees of Port-Royal, too high for spite or calumny or persecution to conceal it, and found its fit expression in those curt words of Angélique upon her death-bed: "Je ne mets point un homme à la place de Dieu." *

There are left to us certain rules of conduct written by the hand of Angélique and dated the Feast of the Assumption, 1635. This was just after she yielded to Saint-Cyran, and already we see the impress of his influence. Unflinching self-restraint, continued penitence—those are the keynotes. "Every morning I will pray that God will give me grace to live and die in the spirit of penitence. When my time of authority is over, I will seek solitude, as far as may be, all my life. I will remind myself daily that, having misused all things, I should deprive myself of all things. That, if innocent persons make an offering to God of that which they have not misused that they may please Him better, how much more am I—who have offended perpetually—bound to renunciation. I beseech our Lord to give me strength to take no pleasure in anything but in the hope of His mercies.

"I will practise the utmost humility in all intercourse with my sisters. I will not rebuke them for their faults at the time that they commit them, nor at the first occasion; and I will always, before I rebuke them, pray that God will grant me grace so that I may speak and they may hear in conformity with His Spirit. And I will abandon my constant supervision

* "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," vol. i. No. 360.

of them, trusting rather in the guidance of God than in excessive observation. I will only write such letters as cannot be avoided; when I write I will do so as simply as possible, and when I find that I have said anything affected in a letter, I will re-write it." *

Savage self-condemnation will be found repeatedly to have been the result of Saint-Cyran's influence—with those on whom he made the deepest impression it was invariable—but it is clear that this development, unnatural and repulsive as it is in its first stages, was not so much prompted by his strictures as by the purity of the ideal of life to which he was endeavouring to summon those who would hearken. The contrast between reality and that ideal was necessarily overwhelming, and when a woman such as Angélique, whose thoughts were continually occupied with spiritual things, is awakened to a conception of new truth, and by its light regards her own imperfection, it is inevitable that the first effect should be an exaggerated revolt against the conditions of the past, and a passionate desire to uproot every occasion of stumbling, that that which is to be should bear no likeness to that which has been. It must not be imagined, however, that a paroxysm of penitence such as is indicated in her code of rules for herself was a permanent condition. Angélique was absolutely sane, though the bias of her mind was towards asceticism, and, moreover, if her good sense had not righted itself, Saint-Cyran would have restricted the expression of her fervour. He had a counsel of perfection, it is true, for a chosen few whom he deemed able to bear it, but none knew better than he that the ideal to which he pointed was unattainable, and was so by the design of God. "One may not, even in complete solitude," said he, "live without sinning many times a day. Were it otherwise, the flesh would be no longer weak and our souls no longer a prey to the shadow of sin. That command, 'Watch!' constrains us to examine ourselves closely lest we give way willingly to evil thoughts." †

* Besoigne, "Hist. de Port-Royal," vol. iii.

† Ibid., vol. iii.: "Esprit de Saint-Cyran."

With the touchstone that he held there was no fear that base metal would long remain undetected when it mingled with the gold. He held the truth so firmly and was so oblivious of the world's standards that any doubleness of motive, any self-deception warping a character that otherwise might pass for upright, was dragged forth into the glare of day, so that it could be regarded and condemned in its native ugliness. And those who went through the ordeal, who faced the unexpected bitterness of self-revelation, and learnt that truth, however great the price, was worth the buying—these, whether men or women, could not afterwards utter Saint-Cyran's name without a murmured blessing.

But at Port-Royal, as elsewhere, there was dross that glittered like pure metal and deceived all eyes. It is easy to imagine the rapidity with which a small alloy of deception would increase and spread under the direction of such a man as Sebastien Zamet. Deliberate and unconscious insincerity could not but be fostered by the self-contemplation he encouraged. He was perpetually expecting a striking revelation of spiritual experiences, and the nuns of Port-Royal, as well as those of the Blessed Sacrament, speedily learnt to imagine themselves the recipients of favours such as are seldom granted to the expectant and never to the self-conscious. The most spiritual among them suffered; on the faulty the effect was deadly; and the extent of the evil, which Saint-Cyran himself could only check with infinite difficulty, may be gathered from a painful incident related by Angélique, an incident that is historically important as having been the cause of her retirement from her charge, and consequently of the failure of the Institute of the Blessed Sacrament as a new Order; but which claims a far deeper interest from its suggestion of the peril inseparable from the system of direction when it ceases to be spiritual and becomes merely human.

The story of Mlle. de Chamesson * must have been a bitter recollection to la Mère Angélique. It begins when her faith in de Langres was absolute, and its development coincided with the

* Clemencet, "Hist.," part i. liv. 6.

gradual disillusion which she was required to endure. Mlle. de Chamesson was the daughter of a lady of high rank who had been under the direction of the Bishop of Langres. He was with this lady when she died, and the personality of the orphan, as well as her desolate position, appealed to him. The Order of the Blessed Sacrament was not yet fully established, but he found it easy to persuade himself and her that her vocation was ultimately to join it, and meanwhile he placed her at Port-Royal under the special charge of Angélique. It is characteristic of Sebastien Zamet that he would not allow his protégée to be subjected to the ordinary system of conventual discipline—a system which has been tested by the experience of generations and proved to be necessary to the peace of a community. He was director at Port-Royal, and he exercised his authority in defiance of the most ordinary principles of common sense, and insisted that she should begin her noviciate as novice-mistress. Angélique—though outraged by the absurd decree—is uniformly just to the girl, realizing possibly the actual disadvantage that she suffered by missing the training most calculated to prepare her for the religious life.

"At first," she says, "she seemed to have a strong instinct towards prayer and for bodily austerity, but she had no understanding of real mortification. When in health she exceeded her physical powers, and then when she was ill required excessive consideration. Moreover, she was very high-spirited and very impatient, yet she humbled herself utterly at times."

Mlle. de Chamesson moved from Port-Royal to the new institution, and there became a most disturbing element, and, representing as she did in the eyes of the Mother-Superior the influence of her friend and protector, Sebastien Zamet, she seemed to be a perpetual testimony to the hopelessness of ever attaining any peace or any advance under such direction. She was utterly unfit to hold the authority she had been given, and the course of life laid down for both nuns and novices of the Order of Adoration did not foster the calm temper and self-forgetful philosophy which alone would have reconciled them to the petulant exactions of one who claimed neither their love nor

their respect. And on this count as on so many others Angélique turned towards Saint-Cyran with a ray of hope, that he would solve a difficulty which to her appeared insoluble. Petty as the distress caused by an unmanageable girl may seem, it had in this instance assumed serious proportions among the cares that weighed on la Mère Angélique. For the rule of obedience is essential to the right ordering of a community, and while Mlle. de Chamesson might give the law instead of humbly learning to accept it, the spirit of obedience was unattainable.

But Saint-Cyran did not succeed in the manner which Angélique had anticipated. It is true that Mlle. de Chamesson—being, it would seem, a girl of a very ordinary type warped by unnatural circumstances—was moved as much as any of her sisters by the exhortations in the convent parlour, and vowed impetuously that she would follow M. de Saint-Cyran's leading whatever it might cost her. He, for once, was quick to take her at her word, because he saw that the condition of affairs called for sharp remedies, and bade Angélique accept her resignation of her post without giving her time for reconsideration. The Bishop, who had been kept informed of all that passed, made no demur, and a new novice-mistress was hurriedly appointed. The unlucky girl, recovering from her sudden fervour, found herself, as it seemed to her, tricked into the position she had most dreaded. Her condition was pitiable. Her protector was far away, and in his absence all the excitement and emotionalism which he had taught her to regard as an integral part of religion had gradually been eliminated from the practices of the Order. In her character there was the devotional element frequently possessed by educated women, and she had been persuaded to exaggerate every sentiment of piety induced by soft music and elaborate ritual, till she had convinced herself that she had a vocation, when actually—as Angélique had long suspected—she had not the faintest conception of the true spirit of the religious life.

The unsparing handling which she received from the Abbé de Saint-Cyran was, however, obviously more for her good, temporal as well as spiritual, than the indulgence of the Bishop

of Langres. As a novice she was openly rebellious; her indignation included not only Saint-Cyran and the whole community, but the Bishop himself, and the tolerant patience of her companions served only to augment her wrath. At length la Mère Angélique judged it necessary to appeal to Zamet, for Mlle. de Chamesson refused to see Saint-Cyran, and the Bishop's original protection of her was a hindrance to the exercise of ordinary authority. Zamet was returning to Paris, and seemed disposed to agree to the decision of Angélique and Saint-Cyran regarding the rebel; namely, that she had better withdraw from the community. But he elected to see her before he gave his final assent. The interview lasted three hours, and the girl gave signal proof of her persuasive powers, for she contrived to win the Bishop over, so that Angélique found herself in a greater difficulty than before. "Mlle. de Chamesson moved him to deep pity," said Zamet; "her soul was sharply tried and burdened, but she was extremely spiritual." And he resumed his direction of her and saw her frequently.

It was impossible for two individuals of such diametrically opposing views as Zamet and Saint-Cyran to work long on the same field in peace and amity. The former returned to Paris full of enthusiasm for Saint-Cyran, and availed himself of his spiritual assistance, when—soon after his arrival—he was stricken with a severe illness. While he was ill he appreciated his visitor's plain-spoken exhortations, but when he recovered the recollection of them fretted his vanity. The austere personality of Saint-Cyran was a perpetual reminder of his own shortcomings, a perpetual obstacle to self-complacency. "God sent this man to be my tormentor," he said once to Angélique, with a curious outburst of candour; "by his means He reveals the Truth to me, but I have not strength to follow it, and it destroys me."

She watched the silent contest with interest, but she knew that the abbé was a hundred-fold stronger than the Bishop, and that the imperturbable resolution of the one must eventually overwhelm the petulant antagonism of the other. Could she have held aloof, she might have awaited the issue with composure, but

the difficulty with Mlle. de Chamesson increased; she demanded urgently to be given the veil, and while Zamet retained even a vestige of authority there seemed little hope of evading the demand. It was always a first instinct with la Mère Angélique to sacrifice her own inclinations. She had weathered the tempest that threatened the Order of the Blessed Sacrament, she had seen the institution gradually purified of all those stains that at the first had besmirched its whiteness, and the sisters who had responded to the call of Saint-Cyran were particularly dear to her. Therefore the suggestion of her conscience that her own withdrawal might bring a solution of the pressing difficulty was most unwelcome, and for that reason especially insistent. It was plain that she had no influence with the wayward novice, and that was a sufficient reason for resignation; moreover, she had always believed herself bound to take every opportunity of escaping a post of authority, and so she resigned her charge into the hands of la Mère Geneviève, took leave with a heavy heart of the sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, and returned to Port-Royal.*

At first it seemed that her sacrifice had been made in vain. She was deeply convinced that Mlle. de Chamesson had no vocation for the religious life—as she expressed it, she "was born to command and not to obey"—and would prove a cause of discord so long as she remained. La Mère Geneviève had removed to the Rue Coquillière to quell the disorder, and had gone fully determined to reduce the girl to submission or to expel her from the convent. But Mlle. de Chamesson had arts against which, apparently, only Angélique and Saint-Cyran were proof, and she contrived to impress the Mother-Abbess at the outset and persuade her that she was misjudged and persecuted. La Mère Geneviève wrote to Angélique, and endeavoured to justify the conduct of the rebel. Angélique—with the patience that only bitter experience could have taught her—exhorted la Mère Geneviève not to commit herself or to discuss the question until the Octave of the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament was past. She knew that if the girl were once professed, she might be a cause of

* February 10, 1636. N. Fontaine, "Mem.," vol. i. p. 32.

endless bickering and scandal, but she could take no further active measures, she could only pray that others might be guided.

At the end of the octave, la Mère Geneviève wrote again, and, in Angélique's judgment, the welfare of the new Order depended on the decision contained in the missive. If the girl had imposed on the Abbess as she had on her director, she would have shown herself capable of distorting the whole principle of obedience, and Angélique trembled for the future of her sisters in the Rue Coquillière. But la Mère Geneviève in that week of silence had discovered her mistake, and had the courage to acknowledge it. She had the courage to act upon it also : Mlle. de Chamesson was told that she must go. She was high-spirited, and waited for no second bidding. Sebastien Zamet had encouraged her to think of herself as possessing spiritual endowments that would be a glory to any community she entered, and this idea had supported her against Angélique and Saint-Cyran, to whose point of view she was naturally antagonistic. But when la Mère Geneviève, who was known to be a devoted follower of the Bishop, sided against her, she saw that her position was untenable, and she applied to Mme. de Longueville (whose protection and friendship had been secured for her by Zamet) to take her away. From that hour her connection with Port-Royal ceased, she severed every link to the community in which she had been a disturbing element for nearly two years. "Ainsi la Maison demeura en grande paix," observes Angélique, when she has recorded her departure.

It was, after all, merely a case of a mistaken vocation, and Mlle. de Chamesson only a wilful girl whose vanity had been fostered under ill-advised direction, but she appeared at a moment of crisis in the history of Port-Royal, and became a sort of tes by which the conflicting forces then silently struggling for the mastery were proved. But for the intervention of Saint-Cyran Angélique must perforce have yielded her judgment where she had given her obedience, and with her inherent tendency to extreme self-condemnation, she would assuredly have attributed all subsequent disaster to her own misgovernment. It is conceivable,

therefore, that Sebastien Zamet's turbulent protégée might have ousted Angélique Arnauld from Port-Royal. But Saint-Cyran intervened, and by so doing, by his display of his own reliance in Divine guidance and complete independence of mundane judgment, he discomfited the Bishop in proportion as he stimulated la Mère Angélique, and so widened the breach between the two that the convent parlour knew de Langres no more, and his dangerous teaching, with its loose phrases, its patter of mystic experience and higher spirituality, gave place to the iron creed instilled by Jansenius and the self-denying ordinance of Angélique.

CHAPTER VI

THE TRIAL OF MARIE-CLAIRE

Brief as was the actual period of Saint-Cyran's connection with Port-Royal, he found in it the true consummation of his long years of thought and study. But, though it gave him the field that was most adapted to display his peculiar powers and to proclaim that strong doctrine wherein, as he believed, lay the salvation of the Church, he could not enter on his dominion there without a contest, the circumstances of which brought into sharp relief his own indomitable personality and the extraordinary depth and passion that for weal or woe animated the nuns of Port-Royal. If those who imagine that the religious rule banishes individuality, and that a nun must yield all force of character when she yields up her will, could be confronted with the intimate records of that community, they would be forced to avow their error. It was the unity of individual strength rather than blind obedience that gave Port-Royal its marvellous impressiveness ; but the source of its power was a source of peril also, and Angélique, when, in a crisis of weariness and lassitude, she admitted a new influence and accepted for herself a new authority, was submitting those whom she loved best to an ordeal of suffering as poignant and heart-searching as any of the violent and visible griefs of the world they had renounced.

No convent could contain more sharply contrasted personalities than those of Mlle. de Chamesson and la Sœur Marie-Claire ; yet, though they had, to all appearance, not a single quality or aspiration in common, it was the lot of both to set Saint-Cyran at defiance, and by so doing to become the material whereon he

proved the indomitable force he had derived from his conviction of himself as the servant and messenger of God. There is not in the whole history of Port-Royal another incident so pitiful or so characteristic as the martyrdom of Marie-Claire. Young as she was when the community moved to Paris, she was no mere cipher among her sisters. She had been Angélique's companion at Maubuisson and a messenger of reform to other houses; she was the fifth of M. Arnauld's numerous daughters, and had possessed from childhood a more marked vocation for the religious life than any other of them. Angélique had made her noviciate especially severe, but her ardour had not flagged; she had been tried and tested also at Maubuisson, and had returned to the mother-house unscathed. Temptations which might have disturbed many an older nun were no danger to her, and her sisters regarded her, with reason, as one of the pillars on which the weaker might depend. Nevertheless, it was for her that a fiery trial was reserved, and she was guided towards it by the hands of those she trusted, so that it is impossible to mark the point at which her feet began to err and stumble, and the instinct of self-will supplanted loyalty.*

The young receptive eagerness of Marie-Claire had responded to the teaching of Sebastien Zamet; the moment of her contact with him was the finest in his career, and seeing how completely la Mère Angélique was deceived regarding him, it was not wonderful that the eyes of Marie-Claire were blind to the shallowness of his professions. But it was not given to her to share in the gradual awakening. She was one of the pilots chosen to go to Tard and imbibe the spirit of that community, that its essence might be disseminated at Port-Royal. And because Sebastien Zamet regarded her as peculiarly adapted to carry out his visionary and extravagant ideals, she was subjected while there to that petty yet incessant persecution of which Angélique herself had sharp experience after she had resigned authority, and which seems to have been regarded by the Bishop

* For the story of la Sœur Marie-Claire, see Clemencet, "Hist.," vol. ii. part i. liv. 6.

as salutary and elevating for the souls of the elect. Marie-Claire was confined to her cell almost entirely, and never permitted to hold any intercourse with her sisters from Port-Royal, though la Mère Agnès, whom she adored, was one of them. All the traditions of her former life, moreover, were assailed by the system maintained at Tard, and she was left to reconcile herself to it as best she might in solitude. Apparently the deprivation of all outward solace, spiritual as well as temporal, was considered likely to induce the complete detachment necessary for that "higher spirituality" on which the nuns of Tard prided themselves. But in the case of Marie-Claire the deprivation was not voluntary, and she acknowledged to Angélique when she was dying that she had not resigned herself to it for many months, and had suffered agony. She did, finally, however, conform in spirit, and seemed likely to fulfil Zamet's conception of her future development. She had a natural inclination to every practice of self-denial, and at Tard the nuns found the variety and excitement that could not reach them otherwise in inventing strange methods of outward mortification, and were encouraged therein by their director, who delighted in the sensational aspect of monasticism, and desired to be impressive, even at the cost of common sense.

But there was nothing superficial about Marie-Claire, and she was ill-suited to be a subject for experiment. It had been under the guidance of Angélique that she had given her allegiance to Zamet, it had been at bitter cost to herself that she had imbibed his theories. Meanwhile Angélique discovered her mistake. She "had been guided by the purposes of God," says an old writer. "God used the Bishop of Langres to open His way; He uses whom He will."* The way was made open that Saint-Cyran, "the servant of God," might enter, but it was not only the Bishop of Langres who was used to open it. Saint-Cyran was the instrument of destiny, the destiny of Port-Royal, even of France herself. The issues were momentous, yet insignificant tools such as Mlle. de Chamesson and la Sœur Marie-Claire

* "Memoire Historique de Port-Royal." Utrecht: 1759.

had their part in bringing them about. The wilfulness of the one and the suffering of the other were alike necessary, for severally they were representative of that material of human souls on which Saint Cyran was to prove the virtue of his discovery of truth.

When Zamet's influence waned, the reputation of the nuns of Tard lost its attraction for Angélique, and she welcomed the decision of the Archbishop to recall the sisters who had been sent thither when Geneviève le Tardif came to Paris. She does not seem to have calculated on the result of their long absence. She was still at the Institute of the Blessed Sacrament when they arrived, and the five travellers, of whom two were her own sisters, stayed with her there before returning to Port-Royal. She was surprised to find la Mère Agnès greatly changed,* forgetting that it was to bring about a change that she had gone to Dijon. There had been little correspondence between them, and Angélique discovered with dismay that Agnès and her companions were still devoted followers of the Bishop of Langres and violently antagonistic to Saint-Cyran. She sent in haste, she says, to warn la Mère Geneviève of the difficulties in store, and then to Saint-Cyran himself, beseeching him to use her sisters gently and persuade them to obedience. Nor was her care wasted. The stern director seems to have relaxed a little in favour of the returning exiles, and Agnès, who had been ready to denounce him as false friend and interloper, wrote after a week that "he spoke as never man spake before."† Her companions were not so easily won over, yet as the time passed they seceded also from their faith in Sebastien Zamet, and submitted to the rigorous exactions of Saint-Cyran.

There was but one exception, one only who refused to admit that the new message given to them was the truest, that the old teaching that demanded so much of outward observance had been hollow, and its teacher a mere wind-bag, charged with impressive phrases. But, though she was alone and all the rest against her,

* See Clemencet, vol. ii. part i. liv. 6.

† "Relation de la Mère Angélique."

it was impossible for any to forget the fact of her rebellion, nor in remembering it to be themselves secure against a whisper of misgiving, for it was hard to realize that one whom they knew to be the purest and most deeply pious of them all could be so confident if she were utterly deluded. The rebel was, in fact, none other than Marie-Claire, and, in her own eyes, her rebellion was simply loyalty, not only to the forms of faith that had of late fulfilled the cravings of a deeply religious nature, but also to the man who had initiated her, at whose bidding she had suffered months of mental torture.

Here was a question that might well have been decided within the quiet of the convent precincts, and the world been none the wiser. In time discipline or persuasion might be relied on to obtain outward conformity at any rate, and the inward conflicts of a solitary nun would need no record. But Saint-Cyran was lifting the lantern of truth high above his head, that its rays might search out and beat upon the dark places of the Church, and inevitably all that concerned the lantern-bearer lay within the radius of the light. So the defiance of Marie-Claire becomes history, and we see Saint-Cyran in his most pitiless aspect, sweeping away human considerations in stern assertion of the doctrine that was his message—the doctrine from which shrinking, self-loving humanity must needs revolt: that man is nothing in himself, that of himself he can do nothing, that penitence itself is a gift of grace, and, coming straight from God, is a more precious gift than its sacramental complement for which the agency of man is needed. So tremendous was Saint-Cyran's conception of the intimate touch of God on man that it overwhelmed the thought of the individual, and inclined him to set too low a value on the power of ceremonies that were consecrated by the tradition and practice of generations of the devout. And the pure soul of Marie-Claire had long been nourished by her faith in the grace that could be communicated by a priest, in the inherent power of the Church to save and sanctify without a responsive effort in the sinner. Her cloistered life had given her no personal experience of the sin of the world,

—vaguely she prayed for sinners, but the deepest realities of sin were hidden from her, and she had no clue to the danger of belief in the efficacy of absolution that did not rest on penitence. It must be remembered that in her eyes Saint-Cyran had not only supplanted Sebastien Zamet, but also cast reproach upon his teaching, and Marie-Claire could not be induced even to see him, and spent half her time in prayer that her sisters might be delivered from the spell he had cast over them, and saved from heresy.

Her determination was a cause of deep distress outside the limits of convent walls as well as within them. The Arnauld clan was large, and the ties of blood were strong among them. Marie-Claire was, moreover, specially cherished, but the fact that her rebellion was the result of the appearance of Saint-Cyran, whom the Arnaulds one and all acclaimed as the God-sent champion of truth, mingled resentment with their pity for her. The remedy was hard to find, however; for the humility of the offender disarmed rebuke, and remonstrance did not shake her. And no one was more perturbed by the untoward state of things than Arnauld d'Andilly. In whichever of his many aspects he is presented to us, whether as courtier, as literary dilettante, or in his final character of Port-Royalist and hermit, the head of the family of Arnauld is always distinguished by his recognition of the bond of family affection, which no creed, however harsh or narrow, had power to weaken; Saint-Cyran had no more staunch supporter, but he loved his young sister dearly, and all that his noted tact and skilful argument could do was tried to melt her resolution. Not until personal effort had been proved to be unavailing did it occur to him to summon to his aid that magic power of grace which God Himself held ready for His children. But at last at the end of a painful interview, at his suggestion, he and his sister knelt in the parlour at Port-Royal, and prayed in silence that God would guide their ignorance and cause His light to shine through clouds of error.

It is a curious and somewhat moving picture, real with that strong consistency of faith and practice that animated the Port-

Royalists. D'Andilly, the many-sided, was wont to bring his wit and social charm within the convent precincts, just as he took the suggestion of piety and self-renunciation with him when he mingled with the Court or lingered at the Hôtel Rambouillet; but at that moment he was stirred out of his natural self, conscious for the time of one desire only—that the truth that was so manifest to him might be revealed to the sad-faced nun who knelt beside him, and the resistance against which man was powerless might be overwhelmed by God Himself.

His prayer was not in vain, though its complete fulfilment was not immediate. La Sœur Marie-Claire rose to her feet prepared to acknowledge that she had been guilty of the sin of disobedience; in deep contrition she surrendered to the Mother-Abbess, and declared her readiness to accept whatever was required of her as her vows bound her. But the accomplishment of d'Andilly's object was little nearer for this capitulation. Saint-Cyran shrank from direction,* he dealt only with those who ardently desired his guidance, and then only when he was convinced that God had called him to the task. And Marie-Claire's obedience did not incline her towards the original cause of her rebellion, nor her humility instil a desire for his aid. Humanly, in short, there seemed no prospect that they would be reconciled, and it must have required the strong faith that was nurtured at Port-Royal to preserve a hope.

Yet assuredly if one human soul more than others is receptive to the suggestion of the Holy Ghost, it must be such a one as that of Marie-Claire, and to her a sudden revelation of the will of God as she knelt in prayer seemed natural rather than miraculous. She had from infancy had a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and it was on the Feast of the Assumption that her defences suddenly gave way, and her antagonism towards Saint-Cyran and his doctrine turned to reverence. In yielding she was as thorough and as single-minded as she had been in resisting. She gave no quarter to her pride, nor dreamed of pleading—what was in fact the truth—that all her scruples had been conscientious, though

* Besoigne, "Hist. de Port-Royal," vol. III.: "Esprit de Saint-Cyran."

she had sinned against her vows in harkening to them. She knew that Saint-Cyran would not spare her, that she would be required to drink the cup of humiliation to the dregs, yet she did not shrink, but rather stretched out her hands to lift it to her lips herself.

The whole strange story is told in the words of the chief actors in it,* and thus told, has its own forcible reality, and loses the strained exotic semblance which it might assume if it could be transported to these latter days when mysteries of faith are lightly dubbed fantastic, and all Port-Royal's fierce asceticism appears but as an outrage upon rationality. Regarded by the light of ordinary self-complacent common sense indeed, Marie-Claire appears as a morbid woman, high-strung and overwrought, thrown into contact with a man whose love of power could feed itself on any prey, however weak and shrinking. But if we look at her by those clear rays which now and then illumine the dark places of Port-Royal, we see in Marie-Claire a human soul, brought by a subtle and tortuous development to a supreme experience, as rare and precious as it was agonizing. We have learnt in the intervening centuries to clothe belief in complicated phrases, but at Port-Royal they did not fear to say that Marie-Claire had received a special gift of grace as she knelt before the Blessed Sacrament on the Feast of the Annunciation, and the essence of the gift had been, not her surrender to Saint-Cyran, but an awakening to true self-consciousness, a glimpse of herself—the self that to others ever appeared so strangely blameless—as seen by the Light Invisible, in the radiance of her Master's Perfectness.

The letter containing her surrender is dated August 25, 1636. She had spent ten days of doubt trying to muster courage for a difficult task, and to assure herself that the cloud upon her had been dispersed for ever. Then she wrote to Saint-Cyran thus—

"My Father,—I had intended to hide from you the great wish that came to me in Communion on the Feast of the Blessed Virgin, to yield myself to you, and to beseech you in the name of

* "Mem. pour servir a l'Hist. de Port-Royal," vol. iii. Utrecht: 1742.

Divine mercy to show me the true path of penitence, because, remembering how—in the days of my hardened heart and blinded sight—I had scorned this means of grace, I knew myself to be unworthy of it, and acknowledged before God that I deserved to forfeit it. But, my father, I must acknowledge to you that the silence on which I was determined is beyond my powers, for I am so moved to repentance that I cannot wait. You may be free to refuse my plea, but I am not free to withdraw it; and only your command will silence my importunity. I have small hope that you will listen to me, and much reason to fear that you will pay no heed to one so miserable, so utterly evil. Nevertheless, I do not give way completely to despair, because I know that the mercies of God are wide, and that it is possible He will move you to this great proof of charity. I have reason to trust in His goodness when I consider the condition from which He has delivered me. I am dismayed at the thought of it, and see that all my life is so corrupt that I hardly dare to claim the grace of penitence. I know that God can save me, but why should I expect Him to work a miracle? I bow to His sentence on me in awe and resignation; and accept whatever it pleases you to do in submission and reverence, desiring, in any event, to be, my father, your most humble and obedient daughter and servant—
Sœur Marie Claire."

It is impossible to read the letter without a realization of the supreme effort it must have cost the writer, and of the after-longing for encouragement and response. But Saint-Cyran was impervious to any appeal of tenderness, and he never showed himself more inexorable than in his treatment of Marie-Claire. Six months passed while she waited in vain for any sign from him, and during that period her sense of her own unworthiness and sin augmented daily, and the certainty that prevailed among her sisters that Saint-Cyran was the specially chosen servant and messenger of God possessed her so intensely that she had no expectation of help or consolation coming to her till he should be inspired to receive her.

At length, in February, 1637, on the eve of a feast-day,

Saint-Cyran was at the convent of Port-Royal and asked to see la Sœur Marie-Claire. When the interview was over (and Saint-Cyran treasured his time and made careful division of it), she went to her cell and wrote down what he had said, and with the recollectedness that never deserted the Arnaulds, even in moments of agitation, she succeeded in recording his utterances so that they are convincingly and unmistakably characteristic of the man (a somewhat remarkable achievement when we remember that until then she had had no personal knowledge of him). Of herself she says nothing in detail, for the record was intended for her own eyes only, but the blanks hardly disturb the sequence of the story, nor is it hard to reconstruct the scene in the convent parlour, so lacking in the barest element of the picturesque, yet instinct with the essence of spiritual tragedy. We see Saint-Cyran, in the shabby cassock that was so familiar to all his world, tall, lean, and a little stooping, as is the wont of scholars, and the shrinking nun, Marie-Claire, in her black robes, kneeling, most probably, so that he could not see her face, for it was one of the simple-minded customs of Port-Royal to suit the action to the word, and kneel to signify humility. If she trembled when the moment came for which she had been longing for so many months, it was not without reason. Saint-Cyran was the man of iron she believed him to be, and had no thought of sparing her a word of that which he believed to be his message because she was young and over-taxed and sorrowful.

"I had neither wished nor intended to see you," he said. "I came here for another purpose, but having gone into the church, I found myself forced to send for you. Your thanksgiving is due to God only. This is the day of S. Ignatius the martyr, a saint to be remembered. Now, what would you have of me? I am here to heal you. Tell me your grief."

It would seem, from what follows, that her long pent-up distress burst forth in a rush of passionate utterance, but Saint-Cyran required self-restraint in all things, and checked her. "We must see," he said, "whether before God you have really been all that you represent. Sometimes people are betrayed by

extravagant feeling into saying what they do not mean, and accepting what they do not believe in. It is necessary to be careful. The outward expression of penitence must be the result of the inward experience of it, and the two must be in union. For we must guard against showing more outward emotion than our inward feeling justifies.

"I praise God because I see you truly returned to Him. You do not sufficiently realize the rarity of such a grace. Of a thousand souls sometimes not one returns. I had believed you incorrigible. If you had died you would have had small claim on heaven. I give you these words, 'Misericordias Domini in æternum cantabo.' The Blessed Virgin says that God remembered the mercy which for four thousand years He seemed to have forgotten. He remembered it that He might recall you from your way of peril. In the light of your past you will see what you are, and by your transformation you will learn what He is."

A few days later she was permitted to make her confession to him. Saint-Cyran heard but few confessions; he believed that the perversion of the sacrament of penance was the chief cause of scandal in the Church, and for his own part regarded each one of his penitents as a definite charge from God to be accepted only in fear and trembling. Probably he had not one more difficult to deal with than Marie-Claire in the phase of self-abasement in which she came to him, and he checked the torrent of self-accusation even more firmly than before. "God is a Spirit," he said, "and spiritual sin is a greater offence to Him than active sin. In that your view is the true one. But beware of exaggeration. A simple confession shows most humility. Place yourself in the presence of God without speech or reflection; He will understand you. Think of the words in this week's Gospel, 'The last shall be first.' In the early centuries sinners asked with the utmost humility to be received as penitents, believing themselves unworthy even to approach the priests.

"There must be reality in penitence. That is why I caused you to wait so long. I left you to find life. For five months you have lived the spiritual life.

"The first gleam of dawn, before it can overwhelm the darkness of night, is called day. Thus the first gleam of the true light with which God touches the soul may be called grace, while it is still surrounded by the shadows of sin."

During the days that intervened between her interview and her confession, Marie-Claire had drawn up and despatched to Saint-Cyran a paper containing a programme for the future. The exact plan which she had laid down for herself is not preserved, but it is known that she demanded to become a lay-sister thenceforward in token of lowliness, and from the comments of Saint-Cyran it is plain that she intended a system of mortification that was more in keeping with the practices of Tard than with the secret self-discipline that he was instilling at Port-Royal; and it would be hard to find a record that conveys more clearly what we believe to have been the true spirit of Saint-Cyran with regard to the vexed question of direction, than his charge to Marie-Claire.

"It is a dangerous error," he said, "to lead every one on the same lines; there should be a special rule for each soul. Many things are harmless to the innocent which are full of danger to souls that have been wounded by sin, for though they may be healed by means of penitence, they are still prone to the weakness resulting from their injuries. A soldier who has been dangerously wounded will feel changes of weather as long as he lives, even though his wounds have healed, and, if he regards his health, will not risk damp or snow as any one else might do fearlessly. I cannot leave you free unless you desire that I should mislead you, as others have done, by tracing your difficulties to the wrong cause. I, who have understanding of your infirmity, am bound to cure you. I am the physician who must find the remedy; it lies in the renunciation you suggest. The way is narrow; it is merely a fraud to imagine it is wide. Moreover, it is a primary rule of penitence that he who has sinned by unlawful use must abstain even from lawful. Let your penitence be marked by silence, by patience, by abstinence—I mean that of the spirit which exacts detachment in all things; I do not wish for any

infliction of physical pain. Beware of tears. I do not wish for any airs or sighs or attitudes, but for a silence of the soul that checks all posing. Pray to God, and yield yourself to God without any affectation. Say the Miserere, and observe this sentence: 'Secundum magnam misericordiam tuam.' The greatest mercy is granted after baptism. Say the penitential psalms; each word therein has a special virtue for healing the wounds of the soul. They express the penitence of David. It is marvellous that, being a king, it should have come to him. You are fortunate in that you are a religious. If you had been in the world it would have been difficult to lead you to the penitence you need. But the cloister helps you to it, and the cloister and the observance of your rule are your best penitence.

"Such things as are obligatory should come before those that are voluntary. You would not have been able to make the suggestions for penitence on your paper without the leading of grace; I could not respond to you without the prompting of God.

"Now that your confession is over we must seek for the remedy, and, as you have made your submission to God in my person, that you may have nothing to reproach me with at the day of Judgment, I must serve you truly. During this Lent you shall be a lay-sister. You must work, but do not do so to excess, that you may be able to persevere. There is a lack of humility in any excess. We are not saints, and we must not mimic them. We must humbly resign ourselves to mediocrity, and live a hidden life, so that there is nothing to be remarked in it. You will consider yourself on an equality with the lay-sisters in all things. Only you must try to be the humblest of them. You will become the lowliest in the house in obedience to Jesus Christ, who bids us, in the Gospel, if we are bidden to a wedding-feast, to take the lowest place. Penitence is the wedding-feast to which God in His great goodness summons you.

"I approve that which is on your paper that you will hold no communication with any one, leaving yourself wholly to one direction. But I do not approve of your awaiting a summons from me. You should come to me when your need suggests it.

Preserve your silence and isolation so far as you can, avoiding all opportunities of amusement and self-gratification, and retiring whenever possible from any place where the talk is of the world, or else, if it be in your power, diverting it. If through illness you have other needs, I leave the consideration of them to the Mother.

"I marvel at the mercies of God towards you. It is wonderful to have returned, having gone so far astray. You should bless God and make Him the offering of your penitence. You have now entered upon your penance, and will wear the dress and accept the conditions which will make it evident; the time has come to let your deeds speak for you. It will be enough if you are constant in humbly submitting to these conditions. In former days penitents assumed a different dress, and the innocent would do the same in token of humility, making themselves equal with the guilty. The Fathers say that the penance that was a remedy to one, was a glory to the other."

So Marie-Claire, in the garb of a lay-sister, did service in the convent kitchen, making herself the humblest among the humble, and preserving silence so far as was possible. She had no longer a place in choir, and that deprivation tried her sorely, and the lay-sisters were of the people and rough of tongue and gesture; doubtless they resented the presence of the shrinking nun whose sharpest penance was to be associated with them, and it is plain they did not spare her. In theory and anticipation she had longed eagerly for any sacrifice that could be exacted of her, but the bare bones of her penance, the trivial sordid round that mortified her pride and made not the faintest appeal to her emotions, shook her resolution. Saint-Cyran knew what he was doing, however, and was confident that she would bear the test. A few only can face the deprivation of spiritual as well as temporal indulgence, and make the offering of self in the silence of real humility which seeks not even a token of acceptance. But to have done so, and—having groped through the darkness humbly and trustfully in the absolute self-surrender that claims no succour—to find a light beyond, the light that

death itself can have no power to dim, is surely to taste that sweetness of God to which the saints bear testimony. Such was the lot in store for Marie-Claire, and as we read her story, resentment against the stern requirements of Saint-Cyran gives way before the realization that he did indeed hold the Divine commission, and by no other path could she have reached her inheritance of joy.

"Are you troubled by one who torments you?" he wrote to her. "I could wish there were four such who would try you incessantly. Endurance such as that would make something of you. You are peculiarly bound to be tolerant, by reason of the infinite tolerance of God towards you. Put up with every kind of ill-humour, therefore, work cheerfully, and use such gentleness that you will win all hearts."

Yet though he was unflinching in exacting the penance he had imposed, he would not encourage any extension of it that was prompted by exaggerated sentiment. When the moment of repining passed, and Marie-Claire, possessed once more by that strange ardour of repentance which had first led her to Saint-Cyran, asked him for an assurance that when Easter came he would allow her to continue in her position as lay-sister, he replied by a rebuke. "You would have me promise that you should remain as you are. I do not like the request. Such souls as are given to God should have no foreboding, should require no security; they should walk by faith which gives no clearness or confidence as the result of good works. They look to God, following Him perpetually, awaiting the occasions which He sends them. I would not wish to know what I shall do when I leave here. We are required to ask God for our bread —that is to say, for His grace—only for each day, but I would wish only to ask for it for each hour. A Christian soul must needs be absolutely pliant. She must know how to turn from labour to quietness, from quietness to labour, from prayer to activity, from activity to prayer; caring for nothing, clinging to nothing, ready to do all things, and ready also to be idle when checked by illness or obedience, remaining useless with gladness

and in peace." To such a soul as Marie-Claire Saint-Cyran's restrictions must have been galling. He, who preached penitence, might have been expected to respond more readily to her expressions of it, but his rule of self-restraint would not admit of any deviation. "You must put away the past," said he; "if it were well to go back over past sin, no one would ever be at peace. If you were to die now, I would give you absolution joyfully, and with as strong a hope for your salvation as I have ever had for any one. The sins for which we do penance are blotted out before God."

So the weeks of Lent passed by, and before it ended the strength of Marie-Claire gave way. She said she welcomed physical suffering, but once more Saint-Cyran bade her refrain from mimicking the saints, to whom alone such resignation was really possible. Possibly of all her suffering that which he himself imposed was sharpest and most salutary; for the redundancy of spiritual sensibility had been fostered in her by Zamet and the nuns of Tard, and was a pressing danger; and truly if she needed to learn meekness, she must have acquired it by the time that her period of penitence was over, for Saint-Cyran gave no quarter to self-love. Referring to his dealing with her, he bade her remember—and the caution was of the very essence of his teaching—to keep before her always "that which S. Paul was at such pains to impress upon us, that men can only plant and water, it is God alone who gives the increase, it is on Him only that we can rely." Her experience lent special difficulty to that lesson. The relentless strength of Saint-Cyran had given her the support of which she stood in need, and all that she had suffered at his hands intensified her original impulse of reliance. But he intended the period of penitence and close direction to be a temporary condition, intended for the attainment of a special object; he would not extend it even though she would fain have had him do so. At the Feast of Pentecost that strange episode in the life of Marie-Claire was ended; she took her place once more in choir, and the plates and dishes were washed by clumsier hands.

It was her part in the years that followed to bear her

testimony to the wisdom or folly of Saint-Cyran's methods, but it was destined that his link to her should break when her time of trial ended, for but a few days after her restoration he was arrested by the order of Richelieu and imprisoned in the Castle of Vincennes.*

It has sometimes been suggested that Cardinal Richelieu conferred a benefit upon the Abbé de Saint-Cyran when he signed the warrant for his arrest, for the influence of the letters † written from his dungeon was so wide-spread, and the impression made by his patient endurance so forcible, that his five years of confinement enhanced his reputation as an equal period of activity could not have done. Whether or no that theory can be accepted, it is certain that to obtain the witness of his methods in a single instance it was well that Saint-Cyran was taken from Port-Royal. For, had his destiny been ordered otherwise, Marie-Claire could not have given conclusive proof that for her at least that period of searching and intimate direction involved no after-weakness; that the surrender of her will had not demoralized her; that, in short, although Saint-Cyran led her watchfully and step by step along a steep and difficult tract of her life's pathway, he left her far more able to find and trust a surer Guide than she had been when he first took her hand. He had been harsh, but he believed himself to be especially the servant of God, the bearer of God's message; and she, sharing his belief, was thankful to him as the messenger, but looked behind him to the Source whence came her summons, and therefore ran no risk of stumbling when his help was no longer within reach. Had he remained in reach, la Sœur Marie-Claire could not have aspired to a higher standard. In proving this she bore her testimony to the outcome of his methods. It seemed that the long months of spiritual suspense and agony, and the succeeding time of utter humility and deprivation, had quenched self-love in her as nearly as is possible in human nature. To banish self-consideration and so find God: that was her sole desire. She chose the dreariest cell, lived on the coarsest fare,

* May, 1638.

† "Lettres Chrestiennes," Duvergier de Hauranne, 2 vols.; 1648.

tended the sick unceasingly, and would not take any indulgence of intercourse with her family or friends when they sought her in the convent parlour. Such was the stern method of Port-Royal, yet who should say that the creed of Marie-Claire was one of fear and trembling? She sought the God of Love, and sought Him with a yearning that overwhelmed all apprehension. The vivid sense of her own faultiness only increased her reliance on His grace. "I have moments of such joy that there can be nothing more perfect imagined on earth," she wrote, "but at my first misdoing the impression vanishes, temptation returns, and I am more than ever fearful. And—though I am astonished that it is so—every impression passes so that one day I cannot recall what I felt at another, for I live in perpetual need of grace and strength and light, without which I should commit every sin imaginable."

In that final conclusion, held with the deep belief of the Port-Royalists, there lies sufficient explanation of the life of Marie-Claire, of Angélique, or of Saint-Cyran himself. The essential difference between them and other devout sons and daughters of the Church was that they *claimed* nothing, that in their eyes mankind was utterly corrupt and evil, that grace was offered as a gift from God, which man was at liberty to reject, but was powerless to summon to his aid. That belief, held with sincere conviction, is overwhelming. It deals a death-blow to placid contentment with average rectitude of life. Held as it was held at Port-Royal, it involved periods of terror lest grace had already been offered and refused, and necessitated renunciation of all distracting elements that might blind the spiritual vision. But, in a sequence no less natural, it brought peace. To realize by experience the guidance and companionship of Christ meant that His grace had been received and God inclined His ear unto them, and that, even in the terrible creed of Port-Royal, was an assurance of salvation.

Marie-Claire, in her simple-minded interpretation of a subtle theory, may truly be said to have died daily. All testimonies relating to her agree. She gave herself to serve others, she strove to smooth the way of obedience to those who found it hard, she

was more skilful than any of her sisters in tending the sick, but nothing that she did prevented her from praying ceaselessly. She made no great profession, but her companions knew that she had found the secret that even in the cloister was so hard to find. And her death was consistent. She welcomed its approach, and, when she fell ill, said to la Mère Agnès that she did not shrink from purgatory, for she knew that she cared for God only, and could not approach Him till her sin was expiated. Catherine Le Maistre, her eldest sister, exclaimed in sharp remonstrance as she heard her, not believing that her illness was of a serious kind. But Marie-Claire answered her calmly : "This is death, sister ; I must go. I will cast myself at the feet of God as one destitute of hope save in His mercy." So strong was her conviction that she was dying that M. Singlin (whom Saint-Cyran had appointed as confessor at Port-Royal) was summoned, but her thoughts turned to Saint-Cyran himself, and she asked all who loved her to give thanks to God on her behalf for the special grace that had given her his aid four years before. With the crucifix in her grasp she said, "It is good to die in the hope of eternal life," and so in the peace of absolute confidence she died.

When she was gone Saint-Cyran paid her his tribute. "One must mourn her," he wrote to Catherine Le Maistre—"being what she was, because among the religious it is hard to find such a soul as hers. So great were her gifts that I hid my appreciation of them, for fear lest by saying what I thought, I should have inspired too much personal feeling towards myself, which I wished to avoid, desiring to love her as one loves the sanctified, rather in feeling than in word.

"She was one of those of whom one may feel assured that they belong to God, whether or no anything remains to them during this life that must be expiated. I pity you, therefore, and not her, for she is blessed, and we shall not find another soul to fill the blank which she has left. Yet after the life she has led and the example she has left to all, and especially to me, we may hope to see her again some day in heaven, and to rejoice with her in the Presence of God.

"This which I am giving you is true consolation, and I need it myself. For those who belong to God as she did are to me as brothers and sisters, and you cannot have experienced any bitterness of grief for her which I have not shared."

In the time that had intervened since his connection with her, Saint-Cyran had passed through his own trial by fire, and his death followed swiftly upon that of Marie-Claire. The nearness of the shadow of death to both of them gives additional solemnity to the record of their intercourse, intensifying its grim reality. And—let us acknowledge it fearlessly—in the judgment that we pass on them, lies the nucleus of our judgment on Port-Royal.

It may seem to many that the story is offensive, and the repetition of it in its intimacy of detail an outrage on good taste ; it concerns itself with the convent cell and the confessional, and is therefore better relegated to obscurity. But while we may admit the undoubted truth of all such comments, we must realize that their truth is not comprehensive, and suspect that the story of Saint-Cyran and Marie-Claire justifies itself in the telling even as it did in actuality. The methods of Saint-Cyran were not such as commend themselves to delicate susceptibilities, but they were the methods of Port-Royal, and the real strength of Port-Royal is indissolubly united with the iron harshness that, considered in an individual, arouses such vehement resentment. Logically, the system was inseparable from the creed. The soul's salvation is the one thing desirable, the path is narrow and steep and difficult, the finding of it only possible by a special grace of God. With such a belief held strenuously by brain and soul, what wonder that Saint-Cyran was unsparing ? "Of a thousand souls sometimes not one returns"—that was to him a conviction rather than a phrase, and, with the thought of it ever before him, he had no thought to spare for the temporal suffering of those to whom he believed that God had sent him.

No man or woman has ever renounced worldly interest for the service of Christ without a belief in the reality of His teaching, in the truth of His claim, in the faithfulness of His

promises. But there exists an element in human nature that continually opposes the spiritual application of such belief, even when it is intellectually accepted. The voice that has exclaimed a hundred times without a tremor, "Ecce nos reliquimus omnia," may learn at last to fail and stumble at that last word with the sickening realization of its falseness. For self-love can don the mask of self-respect with dangerous ease, and the hand that strips away disguises must needs be rough if it would be effectual.

La Mère Angélique, in fierce self-criticism and condemnation, found her own weakness behind the similitude of strength the world admired. She saw herself as helpless without the help of God. To her it seemed that His help came from the lips of a man, that the faith—which her whole life claimed and upheld continually—was not misdirected, when it aided her to accept a message delivered by a human voice. If she was wrong when she elected to impose that strong authority upon herself and her sisters, then it would seem that Port-Royal itself, and all it meant as an impression and as a memory, was a vast and deplorable mistake, for Saint-Cyran and Port-Royal are not divisible. If she was right, we must cease to look on Marie-Claire as the victim of a merciless experiment, but rather as the exponent of maxims that are infinitely familiar.

"Thou alone sufficest him who loves Thee!"* That in all its meaning was the truth Saint-Cyran summoned Marie-Claire to test. Only through pain, through extremity of humiliation, through deprivation against which the last instincts of self-love leap into fierce revolt, could she or any other taste the sufficiency the Saviour promised. The call may come only to a few, and even from them the response is wrung only by bitterest suffering; yet though the suffering be evident, we need waste no pity on those whose lot it is to hear and answer, for we may rest assured that their vocation in its cost and in its recompense is one among the many mysteries concealed from eyes whose wont it is to gaze upon the world.

* "Of the Imitation of Christ," iii. 23.

"Il est vrai que j'ai des momens si heureux qu'il n'y a rien de si doux en la terre." In that simple statement lies the conclusion of the whole matter, for it shows us that Marie-Claire attained before death silenced the possibility of testimony, and on her attainment rests the vindication of Saint-Cyran.

CHAPTER VII

THE HERMITS OF PORT-ROYAL

THE picture of a dedicated life, such as that of Marie-Claire, deeply impressive though it may be to many minds, carries with it a suggestion of wonder, of regret at the renunciation of untasted joys, and of question whether the experience whereby God often seems to train His children may legitimately be rejected in obedience to an individual will. Such misgivings can only be silenced by the understanding of the call of God as la Mère Angélique understood it, by the belief that all who listen for that summons will be taught His will, and that not one among the lives that, with a pure and true intention, have been hidden within the silence of a convent could have fulfilled God's purpose for it by any other means. The high vocation of the wife and mother is as definite a gift from God as that of the religious, but the nun was not a wife and mother wasted. That was the contention of Angélique. To her the call to the religious life was absolutely definite and indisputable, and she did not fear to defy the opinion of the world when she maintained that in that connection there could be no weighing of expediency.

Her own vocation was individual, in no sense typical of those which she was constantly considering. Nevertheless, she was the supreme representative of the religious in the age in which she lived, and while she herself held a far more prominent place in the world than is natural to a nun, the atmosphere that she diffused around her fostered the idea of detachment, and was mainly responsible for the practices of those celebrated devotees who are grouped together as the Hermits of Port-Royal. It is no

exaggerated assertion that the hermits would never have existed if the nuns had not re-established and preserved their Rule ; their theory of self-abnegation was the offspring of the religious life of Port-Royal, but they could testify to the convincingness of the creed of Port-Royal before the world as the nuns could not do. Popular opinion will very rarely accept a single motive for a woman's self-renunciation, but the hermits were known to have held the cup they rejected, and to have tasted its sweets before they put it from them of their own free will. They were not, any of them, men of notorious wickedness, who repented as sensationally as they had sinned. Of these there were many contemporary examples, but they found a more fitting haven with de Rancé at La Trappe than with Le Maistre in the Port-Royal precincts. It was a sober and reasoned conviction whereby the hermits of Port-Royal were actuated, but the reconstitution of their lives was as complete as though they had been swept off their balance by violent reaction. And the fact that they were absolutely in sympathy with la Mère Angélique and her community, and yet were not monks nor bound by any vows, is oddly characteristic of the depth of the Port-Royal influence and spirit. For Angélique and her sisters, while they kept their Rule exactly, renounced their goods, preserved the silence and the fasts ordained, and said their Office with scrupulous regularity, were well aware that these things were but the outer shell of the religious life ; that all such laws might be preserved intact, and yet the true response to the call of their vocation be lacking. The one essential could be realized by these grave gentlemen (who worked and wrote and prayed in their poor dwellings within sound of their convent bell) as well as by themselves, although they had made definite profession, and in the world's sight were irrevocably bound by the threefold vow. For the one essential was to strive ceaselessly for self-renunciation, and to strive in spite of the knowledge that complete attainment was impossible while mortal life continued. It was the secret of Port-Royal to be as persistent in aspiration as in penitence, and also to regard the depravity of others as calling, not for self-complacency, but for self-devotion,

and for an ardour of prayer that cried for pity on those who had not grace to pray themselves. It is plain that that secret was in nowise concerned with written laws or spoken vows, and could be held as worthily by the unpledged recluses as by their cloistered sisters.

Thus the hermits, by a strange paradox, bore testimony by their existence to the effective influence of the religious life, and yet by their practice showed that its outer bonds and pledges were unessential, proving thereby that, in spite of all discouragements, la Mère Angélique had realized her ideal of reformation, and made the spirit of her calling stronger than the letter. The first of the hermits was in truth her spiritual son, and, although not actually the most notable of the company that he inaugurated, he was as necessary to them as she had been to the reformed Port-Royal, and in him, as in her, strenuous resolve found its necessary complement of still endurance.

"Toutefois l'homme qui se repent est immense," * said Chateaubriand. The phrase rises continually to our lips as we regard Antoine Le Maistre. The world had opened before him as an arena devised for the display of the powers that God had given him. He was the son of Catherine Arnauld, the eldest daughter of M. Antoine Arnauld, married to the descendant of a well-known orator ;† and therefore in his veins ran the blood of a race of notable men who had followed the calling, which he himself adopted, with honour and success. From the first it was evident that he was destined to outstrip them all and attain to glories which their measure of eloquence and learning could never have commanded, and he concentrated himself on the goal of his ambition with the singleness of purpose whereby alone a man may make himself the master of his fate. His greatness, alike in aspiration and renunciation, are peculiarly the property of Port-Royal. A man's repentance is inseparable from the record of his early years, and Saint-Cyran's gospel of penitence could not have had a better exponent than the young

* "Vie de Rancé," liv. iii.

† Le Maistre, advocate of Henri IV. when King of Navarre.

advocate whom the world esteemed as exceptionally virtuous, but who, confronted by the standard of Port-Royal, found himself so far lacking that nothing but entire abnegation would serve to still his conscience. "L'homme qui se repent est immense." To know that the words are true it is worth while to see what repentance meant, and to glance at the fascination of the life from which the men who hearkened to the call of Christ were summoned.

For Antoine Le Maistre lived in an age when men of his brilliant ability had every opportunity of shining in society, and belonged to the class which had specially profited by that renaissance of intellectual converse for which the Hôtel Rambouillet was responsible. The words and works of Angélique Arnauld and the Abbé de Saint-Cyran are apt to convey the impression that no golden mean existed betwixt immeasurable depravity and complete seclusion. To them the life of the world seems synonymous with a life of sin. But to those who lived in the world there appeared to be gradations in reform, and some who gathered round Arthenice * in the Chambre Bleue, looked back upon the darkness of the state from which her charming voice had summoned them with all the self-complacent thankfulness of the Methodist conscious of "a call." And, although intellectual influence can claim no comparison with spiritual, its result tends towards reflection and refinement, qualities that threatened to become extinct in society in the early years of the seventeenth century; and Angélique Arnauld, when she closed the wicket of Port-Royal against all comers, was scarcely more definite in her challenge to established custom than was Catherine de Vivonne when she flung open the doors of the Hôtel Rambouillet, and inaugurated a society where intellect and moral rectitude were more esteemed than rank or ascendancy at Court.

Mme. la Marquise herself seems, like la Mère Angélique, to have been the one woman competent to fulfil her special task.

* Catherine de Vivonne, Marquise de Rambouillet. The anagram of her name, by which she was generally known, was arranged by the poet Malherbe.

Because no petty rivalries or small personal ambitions occupied her thoughts, she was able to bring out all that was best in the men and women who surrounded her, and, having once established a basis of sympathy, could mould them to some semblance of her ideal. Her experiment was well received. The jaded courtier found entertainment in the company of a man of letters, whose wits were sharpened by the struggle for existence, and the woman of fashion did not resent the suggestion that the charm of her beauty would be augmented by a moderate provision of learning. Learning, according to the dictum of Arthenice, was to take the place of love at the Hôtel Rambouillet, and the spirit of rivalry, that was a curse at Court, be concentrated on intellectual rather than amorous contests. Class distinctions were to be levelled also, and the scholar who was winning fame by his own labour was to be regarded as the equal of the man of rank. Of course, in actual fact, a nobleman, even at the Hôtel Rambouillet, did not regard himself as on a par with a hack-writer; the one continued to condescend and the other to assert himself, because the tradition of centuries cannot be eliminated even by sound arguments delivered in the most charming manner. But the possibility of a bridge across the gulf was a new idea, and the men and women who had paced the galleries of the Louvre and grown heart-sick and weary in a long round of monotonous festivities, caught a new zest of life from contact with persons whose experience was wholly different from their own. Each order had a stimulating effect upon the other, each had something to learn and to communicate, and thus conversation ceased to be merely a substitute for silence, and people whose thoughts were clamouring for expression awoke to the fact that their native language was worth respecting and preserving. The desire to protect the language, and the recognition of the claim of intellect irrespective of rank, were, moreover, closely linked with the influences and instincts that were responsible for the French Academy. And the French Academy, while it owed its birth indirectly to the Hôtel Rambouillet and aristocratic influence, was a declaration of literary independence on the part of the middle class, a valiant

attempt to throw off the shackles of patronage and proclaim their intellectual ascendency.

It was to this middle class—a class whose privileges and possibilities widened with every year—that the Arnauld family naturally belonged. During the period that preceded the inauguration of the Hôtel Rambouillet, such learning as existed was gradually becoming the monopoly of the citizen. The boys who were to be magistrates and advocates depended on their brains, and therefore a careful parent would give them the best intellectual equipment he could afford, but the sons of noblemen went into the army as a matter of course, and, when there was no fighting to be done, employed what brains they had in weaving or evading the treasonable plots that continually convulsed society, leaving thought and study and inquiry to their inferiors. And the citizens did not waste their opportunity. The reign of Louis XIII. was a time of degradation as concerned the glory and glamour that should enshrine the social life of Courts, if Courts are to exist at all, but it was a time of inspiration to men who, conscious of their own abilities, saw the path to the highest prizes of wealth and honour opening before all who had the courage and capacity to brave its difficulties.

Arnauld d'Andilly, the eldest brother of la Mère Angélique, was welcome in every salon that it pleased him to frequent, and belonged to the inner circle of intimates at the Hôtel Rambouillet, and the doors that were open to him were not likely to be closed against Antoine Le Maistre, whose personal attraction was not less than his uncle's, while his intellect was of a far higher order. From the day of his first appearance at the bar, moreover, Le Maistre was a marked man. Before long it became a common saying that when the young advocate was going to plead preachers had best be silent, for they would whistle vainly for a congregation.* To him was given that intoxicating success that bursts with a sort of radiance upon the vision of others. He took the world by storm at the very first assault, and lived every moment of his life with a fire and eagerness of which it is exhilarating even to think.

* N. Fontaine, "Mem.," vol. i. p. 222.

Unconsciously he gave a glimpse of himself as he had been in those ardent days of his young ambition, when, years afterwards, he was commenting on the legal profession. "It is very hard," said he, "to demur at giving help to a friend, and once having agreed to do so, one is carried away into proving that guilt was innocence, and by trickery and the magic of words one turns black into white. Thus dust is thrown in the eyes of judges, and they are persuaded into unjust decrees." *

The indication of his own capacity to throw dust in the eyes of judges was given guilelessly, but it is clear that he was speaking from experience. He was, indeed, freely recognized as the most brilliant orator of his generation; Richelieu was known to have made close inquiries about him and spoken of him favourably; and both the adulation and abuse of his compeers testified to the esteem in which they held him. To such a man life seemed to offer every promise of happiness for himself and endless opportunity of benefiting others. Antoine Le Maistre might have brought his own fire and audacity into the prosy discussions of the French Academy; he might have leavened the absurdities of literary society by the suggestions of his own keen insight; he might even have given his warning when the citizens of Paris so rashly staked their fortunes on the professions of a scatter-brained plotter like de Beaufort, and stemmed the tide of blood-shed and disaster that resulted. There were many paths open to him, and in his breast burned the love of life, the fire of ambition which is the best incentive to high endeavour. Many prophecies concerning his career were rife, and many a wise-acre was ready to foretell the exact measure of his future glory. Seguier, the Chancellor, was keenest among his admirers, and when he was twenty-five made him Councillor of State, with the full approval of Richelieu; thus, as it seemed, securing for him both wealth and position so long as his life lasted.

But the prophecies concerning him were based on knowledge that was not complete. His wit, his charm, his vigorous intellect, and the deep impression that his personality made on others, all

* Clemencet, "Hist.," part i. liv. 6.

these were duly weighed with the conspicuous fact of his gift of oratory, and made up a net result of absolute confidence in his great destiny. One element was left outside the calculation, however. Those who saw Le Maistre in the law courts, and were carried away by the magic of his eloquence, had no reason to call to their remembrance the fact of his near kinship to Angélique Arnauld, or to turn their thoughts towards the Faubourg S. Jacques and the new convent of Port-Royal. Yet without such thoughts and recollections all judgment on the prospects of the young orator was null and void. His mother, Catherine Arnauld, and the four nuns of Port-Royal who were his aunts, watched his career with apprehension, and prayed continually that by the grace of God it might be checked ere the world mastered him irrevocably. Most people are conscious of a curious disinclination to believe in direct answers to prayer, but, from the standpoint of Port-Royal, the answer came in natural sequence, because the request proceeded from the same Source as the response. The event which to Paris was a nine-days' wonder, at Port-Royal was only a reason for additional thanksgiving. Even its dramatic aspect was wasted on them. Without a moment of flinching or regret they watched while the most brilliant lawyer of his generation, on the high tide of a dazzling success, stopped in full view of an applauding world, looked steadily at the alluring vision of all that world was offering him, looked and appraised, and resolutely turned away for ever.

The occasion of the summons to Antoine Le Maistre was the death of a relative, the wife of Arnauld d'Andilly.* But the appeal which was thus made to him can only have brought to a climax thoughts that had long been in his mind. The Abbé de Saint-Cyran had been constantly with Mme. d'Andilly during her last illness, and thus what had been mere acquaintance between him and Le Maistre developed into intimacy. When Mme. d'Andilly died, Le Maistre awoke to the sense that he had reached a point in his path of life where two ways diverged.

* In August, 1637. See N. Fontaine, "Mem.," vol. i. p. 225.

He might continue his ascent towards the highest honour by returning to the occupations and interests that had hitherto fulfilled his needs. In that case his intercourse with M. de Saint-Cyran would cease. That was the natural, almost the inevitable, course. The alternative was bizarre, irrational, contrary to every maxim of prudence or of wisdom. Antoine Le Maistre was just thirty, he had a well-trained mind, he was not the victim of a transient impulse, and he knew his world thoroughly. Yet when Mme. d'Andilly had been laid to rest, he went to M. de Saint-Cyran and told him that it was his intention to turn his back for ever on the Bar, on the life of Paris, and all it meant to him of "that unrest that men miscall delight," and seek the reality of religion in silence and poverty and prayer.

If ever, since His human voice was heard in Galilee, the call of the Saviour to "sell all that thou hast" has come to one of great possessions, it came to Antoine Le Maistre. Nor was there lacking the repetition of the response of long ago; thenceforward it was ever on the lips of the first of the Port-Royal hermits, echoing in every prayer, inspiring every sacrifice: "Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner!"

It was his part to make a practical demonstration of that tremendous doctrine of penitence which Saint-Cyran preached. And in his case, strange and abnormal though it was, Saint-Cyran did not deviate from his ordinary deliberate methods. If haste was indiscreet in the affairs of men, it was not less so when the service of God came under consideration. Therefore Le Maistre was required to fulfil his engagements and continue working on the old footing for a time. He obeyed, but he obeyed unwillingly, and his world was not slow to note the difference in him. There was no longer a pause in the clatter of the Court House when he rose, for he spoke as one in a dream, and those who had envied him in the past declared that his orations made them sleepy. He said himself that when his brain was fired with his subject and his old joy in mastering the minds of others possessed him, his glance would fall upon a crucifix hanging high up and thick with dust, and from that moment his thoughts

refused to be controlled.* Yet the flame of genius and ambition blazed up once more ere it was finally extinguished. Some echo of the scorn his former rivals were casting at him came to his hearing, and the last day of the session was made notable by a harangue that reassured his admirers, routed his enemies, and placed his reputation on a higher pinnacle than ever. Not one of those who heard him suspected that he spoke as a dying man, but he left the Palais de Justice with an unalterable resolve never to enter it again.

The lodging of M. de Saint-Cyran was opposite the Monastery of the Chartreux, and it was there that M. Le Maistre repaired when the duties of his office no longer claimed him. He spent the vacation there, and when the term began again he wrote to the Chancellor to announce that he would plead no more in court.† To his father he wrote at the same time and to the same effect, though, perhaps, the irrevocable nature of his decision was best expressed in the latter case. "I tell you," he said, "what you know better than I, I doubt not, that to choose the way of the Christian is no sign of weakness, since one (who has not hitherto been counted either a fool or a prude, and who is still what he was when last he had the honour of seeing you) has made up his mind to exchange his fine condition as a Speaker and State Councillor into that of a humble servant of Jesus Christ." ‡

Thus the die was cast, and Court and City learnt that Antoine Le Maistre had passed out of the ken of reasoning folk, and become the disciple of Saint-Cyran, and the upholder of strange, uncomfortable doctrines. And Richelieu, who had a special capacity for using others to build up his own glory, and had already prepared a place for the celebrated young advocate, glanced towards the Abbé de Saint-Cyran, who was avowedly responsible for the untoward incident, and perceived that he was dangerous. Many voices had already whispered to him that it was so—voices of those who had hated Zamet and his Institution of the Blessed Sacrament, voices of those who disliked the

* N. Fontaine, "Mem.," vol. i. p. 228.
† Ibid., p. 232. ‡ Ibid., p. 235.

Arnauld faction and their peculiar notoriety, multitudinous voices of those who resented the assurance that they were miserable sinners, and were outraged by the insolence of one whose message was a summons to repentance. When the name of Antoine Le Maistre was on every lip, the whispers gathered volume, but Richelieu would have paid no heed if his own instinct had not warned him that the teaching of this audacious priest held a suggestion of independence that was at variance with the submissive sentiments characteristic of loyal subjects. Obviously a subject who had formed a right conception of his duty to the state would not have been the occasion of the retirement of a valued public servant, without at least taking council with the Cardinal. The attitude of Saint-Cyran towards authority was observed attentively by the man who was himself authority personified. The verdict left no room for doubt as to his doom. "He is a greater danger than half a dozen armies," said Richelieu, grimly; "when the whole of France bows to my wishes, he alone has the impudence to defy me!" *

The Cardinal could admire recklessness, but he could not condone it. When it was recognized that the action of Le Maistre was irrevocable, the officers of the law descended on Saint-Cyran in his retirement with a warrant for his arrest,† and bore him off to the fortress of Vincennes, where for five years he had ample opportunity to test the virtues of solitude and silence.

The blow, though it fell suddenly, was not altogether unexpected. When M. Le Maistre appealed to him for direction, Saint-Cyran had realized that he was called upon to trust his feet to dangerous ground. "We cannot measure the result," he said, "but we must be prepared for what God wills. Where His service is in question there may be no reserves." ‡ He went forward boldly, therefore, and did not flinch when he was required to take the consequences. There are many traits in his character,

* Besoigne, "Hist. de Port-Royal," vol. iii. p. 319.
† May 14, 1638.
‡ Besoigne, "Hist. de Port-Royal," vol. iii. p. 373.

many details of his actual practice which may be difficult to contemplate without distaste and shrinking, but it is impossible not to accord admiration to his gallantry at this point, for he knew the danger which the interpretation of his own maxims in the person of Le Maistre would involve, and he accepted it calmly.

When the doors of his prison had clanged upon him, Antoine Le Maistre wrote to him in a passion of regret at the misfortune of which he was the involuntary cause. Saint-Cyran replied with the resigned composure that won for him a wider influence when in bondage than when he was free to speak face to face. "If, indeed, your withdrawal is the cause of my imprisonment," he said, "I am the most fortunate of men. If it might please God to offer me others like you, I would counsel them as I counselled you, though I should be burnt for it. But it is striking in all this, that that which is the ruling maxim of the Gospel (which is renunciation of the world) is now declared to be misconception of the Gospel, and an exaggeration." *

It is impossible to divine the real intention of Cardinal Richelieu when he added the imprisonment of Saint-Cyran to his long account of acts of tyranny; but it is safe to affirm that, if in this instance he had had the gift of foresight, the nuns of Port-Royal would not have been required to mourn the loss of their director. Saint-Cyran, as a constant personal influence inculcating his own dangerous doctrines among a band of reckless devotees, might justly cause anxieties, but Saint-Cyran in prison, Saint-Cyran regarded as a persecuted saint, spoken of in hushed and reverend whispers, and prayed for hourly with passionate fervour, held a power that no authority could touch, a power against which even the Cardinal knew himself defenceless. And if he thought to win back Le Maistre to the smooth path of conventionality and common sense, by removing the headstrong priest who was held responsible for his follies, he was yet further disappointed. Le Maistre was utterly imperturbable in his resolve; he never seems to have thrown a backward glance at his past glories, save to sum up their emptiness. His feet had

* Besoigne, "Hist. de Port-Royal," vol. iii. p. 378.

already found firm standing-ground when his eyes fixed themselves on the dust-laden Christ in the Palace of Justice, and led his thoughts from Parisian malefactors to the dying thieves on Calvary. He was the first of the strange community known to their generation as "Les Solitaires de Port-Royal," and, as was fitting, he was essentially and supremely solitary. He could accept and profit by the help of another man, but such help was not necessary to him. He was dependent, but his dependence was on the Master who had called him from his fellows with so special and individual a call.

With that curious self-consciousness which is characteristic of Port-Royal, and peculiarly so of the race of Arnauld, he set forth the whole position with a full appreciation of the strangeness of the place assigned to him. The imprisonment of Saint-Cyran had startled him into a fresh summing-up of his views of himself and of the world, and he gave them form in a letter to M. Singlin, who had condoled with him on the loss he had sustained. "I am well aware, Monsieur," he wrote, "that I am regarded by some people with curiosity, by others with astonishment, by others with pity, by others with indignation. Very few, I doubt, look on the change in me as the fruit of the wisdom of the Son of God, and worship the cause in recognizing the effect. They see the severance of many chains that bound me to the world, to my post, and to myself. For a hundred years, perhaps, there has not been another instance of a man placed as I was in the midst of the corruption of the Palais, in the prime of life, and possessing every advantage of connection, and all the vanity of the orator, choosing the moment when his reputation was most firm, his wealth most assured, and his hopes at their highest, to break every bond and throw off all the enchantment whereby mankind is held; making himself poor where he had hitherto laboured for riches; practising austerity and penitence where he had hitherto revelled in luxury; living in solitude where he had hitherto been courted by other men; caring only for contemplation where he had been wont to care only for work; shrouding himself in the darkness of a hidden life where he had always been in the midst

of excitement and notoriety; and finally practising continual silence when his claim for admiration had rested upon speech. Nevertheless, though such a miracle may be more remarkable than that which gives the blind their sight, or the dumb their power of speech, and the resurrection of the dead is but a figure for the resurrection of sinners, our generation is so hardened, that this, which should be regarded as a holy thing, is merely noted as extraordinary, and we have so little knowledge of God that we ignore His greatest works. . . . I am as much impressed with the depth of my own vocation as if it was that of some one else, and I begin to understand what you, Monsieur, assured me, that the rest of my life may be a witness to the Divine purpose in it, and pay tribute of glory to God. It only rests with us to pray continually for the gift of perseverance, which is inseparable from a real vocation, and is imparted by the Holy Spirit.

"And truly, as you say, we have reason for hope, seeing that God, in taking from us him whom we valued most and who could give us most assistance on our road, has given us fresh inspiration to penitence and retirement by reason of his example. For he is in even greater solitude and greater penitence than we are, and thus the infinite goodness of God causes him still to speak to us daily of the two points of our vocation." *

Probably it was the general opinion that M. Le Maistre had been the victim of hypnotic influence (which in the phraseology of the time was sorcery), and that when the magician was safely under lock and key he would regain his mental equilibrium. If we consider it, his self-chosen position was calculated to excite astonishment. He himself catalogued the points of contrast between past and present,† but he does not seem to have realized what is perhaps its most striking feature. Other men would elect to exchange one existing condition of life for another that

* "Necrologe de Port-Royal," vol. ii.

† "Le Maistre m'a avoué depuis que sa conversion lui paroissoit aussi difficile que celle d'un Roi qui renonceroit à son royaume" (N. Fontaine, "Mem.," vol. i. p. 230).

might be its exact antithesis, but, though in doing so they might be subduing every natural instinct, they were, as a rule, following in the steps of some who had gone before. Le Maistre, at the outset, created his own conditions, and made isolation their dominant characteristic. He did not retire into the wilderness—that would, indeed, have been an obvious and hackneyed course for one in his condition of mind—but, within earshot of the world that had so supremely been his world, he planned for himself and rigidly fulfilled a routine that was hardly less rigorous and far more lonely than that practised by the monks of the Chartreux, who were for long his neighbours in the Faubourg S. Jacques. He gave a practical demonstration of Saint-Cyran's precept of hourly dependence on the will of God, for he seems to have had no prospect and to have sought for none, to have claimed nothing to fill the void resulting from his unreserved renunciation, but simply to have waited "in prone submission," without allowing his most secret thoughts to frame a questioning "cui bono?" Yet many a kindly heart must have swelled with indignation and regret at the thought of that futile and gratuitous sacrifice of hope and happiness, and even the most generously disposed of reasonable folk could find no legitimate defence of such egregious folly.

The sensational conversion of Le Maistre was necessary, nevertheless, if the labour and suffering of la Mère Angélique were to find their consummation, and the headlong step he took was as fully justified in the event, as had been his kinswoman's defence of the cloister, as her resistance of Mme. d'Estrées, or as any other of the many acts of hers that contributed to shape the clear inevitable destiny of Port-Royal and its children. He, when he came to his great turning-point, had no more inkling of the secrets of futurity than she had had when again and again she was forced to choose betwixt two paths that branched in front of her. At the time of their choice each was constrained in the making of it, and looking back when the time of choice was long gone by, each—Angélique Arnauld and Antoine Le Maistre—could recognize that the Grace of God had led them; that to fulfil His purpose for them and for Port-Royal, the thing which they

had done (at cost, perhaps, of bitterness that never could be told) was necessary; and that, had they wavered, fearing to make their venture blindly, they would have missed the vocation to which He called them, and been unfaithful stewards of a great inheritance. It is in their solitude that they are so especially impressive. In May, 1638, Saint-Cyran was arrested on those charges of heresy which were not put into form till a year later, and M. Le Maistre could no longer obtain spiritual help from an intellectual equal. M. Singlin, the recognized successor to Saint-Cyran, was an inspired peasant very indifferently educated, and a nature such as that of M. Le Maistre must have made a persistent call for intercourse with some one whose attainments and capacities were more on a level with his own. Moreover, the world had ceased to be excited about him. He would, no doubt, have been welcomed had he returned to it, but the wonder of his disappearance had died without, apparently, bearing any fruit. He had not the support of the life of a community; he had at that time no literary, or educational, or even manual work to justify him in his own sight, if misgivings should suggest themselves; he had not the most remote intention of preparing for the priesthood, and no recognized method of benefiting others was open to him. Probably if it had not been for Port-Royal, even such courage as his must have given way; but, though his personal intercourse with his kinswomen there was rare, he knew that in spirit he was one with them, that they ventured even as he was venturing, and were ever ready to bear testimony to the present recompense of present sacrifice. So he stood firm, and in due course his patience bore the first and the most precious of its fruits.

Catherine Le Maistre was the mother of five sons, of whom Antoine was the eldest. The second, M. Le Maistre de Sericourt, was a very gallant soldier. He had fought for France, had been severely wounded, had borne imprisonment and exposure and privation, and having survived all these experiences, he was promised the command of an old-established regiment, and returned to Paris to present himself at Court and assume his charge. The bond of affection between him and his brother was a very

close one; but Antoine's success and assured position gave him a pre-eminence in the family, more marked than that which he could claim by right of seniority, and de Sericourt, when he left Paris to join the army, had taken with him an impression of the brilliant young advocate (whose whole demeanour had the assurance which proceeds from and commands success) that remained vivid during all his years of absence. He returned full of eagerness to recover the old bonds of fellowship, to admire and defer to the brother who was the recognized genius of the family as he had always done. A rumour of the part Antoine had chosen had reached him, but he had only partially believed it, and it was not till he came to Paris and sought for him that he was confronted by the astounding truth.

In the gay life of camp and garrison there had been little to suggest the questions that filled the minds of so many of his kinsfolk perpetually. It was true that his mother's influence in his boyish days had all been on the side of systematic self-control and careful observance of the Church's ordinances, and that he had been vaguely conscious that the point of view of his mother's family was different from that of the outside world with which he mixed when he grew to manhood. All this was inevitable, but the pious atmosphere of his home did not make gaiety and excitement uncongenial to the young soldier; possibly it had the opposite effect, and the clash and glitter that surrounded him was the more welcome on account of a dim remembrance of those black-veiled figures whom he had often watched as they glided into their choir-stalls in the church at Port-Royal, and of whose cloistered lives he had heard his mother speak with envious admiration. Whatever place, moreover, such recollections had in his general view of life, they did not in the least prepare him for the demeanour of his brother and the complete alteration of his circumstances. Perhaps its absolute reality was not borne in upon him till they were face to face in the humble lodging near the Convent of Port-Royal. And Antoine, despite his newly acquired gravity and his independence of public opinion, was not entirely impervious where de Sericourt was concerned. His first

words were full of his old animation. "Well, do you know me, brother?" he cried. "Behold the M. Le Maistre of old days. He is dead to the world now, and desires speech with God only. I used to worry myself to very little purpose to plead the cause of other people; now I only plead my own. I have relinquished everything. Have you come to pay me the same compliment, brother, as is paid me by so many others in the world, and say I have gone crazy?" *

Le Maistre the recluse was in one essential point, at least, the M. Le Maistre of old days. The charm of manner that had commended every cause he advocated did not desert him when once more he wished to exercise it. De Sericourt, who had always admired and been influenced by him, was not repelled by the savage reality of this interpretation of the whole duty of man, but instead found the long-dormant impressions of his childhood springing into renewed life as he stood face to face with his brother amid the mean surroundings that indicated deliberate defiance of all custom and convention. At that moment he, in his turn, discovered that the path in front of him divided, and he must choose his way; it seemed to him, indeed, that the point of divergence was at his very feet, and that he might not pause. "Nay, truly, brother," he exclaimed, "you will not get that compliment from me. There are some kinds of madness that are the fruit of wisdom. Yours is among them. Ever since I heard your news I have wished many times that I might follow you. I own I was more than half inclined to before I came here, and what I see determines me."

It was a headlong and impetuous resolution, and Saint-Cyran would probably have bidden the young soldier wait for a time ere he committed himself before the world; but Antoine Le Maistre was far too eager to share his own discoveries with his brother to counsel prudence, and M. de Sericourt joined him forthwith in his retirement. The young soldier brought a perfectly new element into the atmosphere of Port-Royal, and threw away his prospects with all the reckless gallantry with which he

* N. Fontaine, "Mem.," vol. i. p. 300.

had been wont to risk his life. Just as he would have followed his brother into the thickest of the fight without a thought of the joys of strength and freedom of which he might at any moment be deprived, so did he follow him in that tremendous venture which meant the certain loss of all delight in living, and of all sympathy or friendship among his compeers. Nor does he seem to have flinched in resolution. His brother told him that the sacrifice was infinitely worth while. He made it with a child-like faith in that assurance, and his experience satisfied him. He surrendered to M. de Saint-Cyran with a soldierly simplicity that is in curious contrast to his brother's elaborate periods and carefully rounded phrases.

"Monsieur," he wrote to the imprisoned priest, "if I could have the happiness of seeing you, I should lay my sword at your feet as my brother lays his pen. I am determined to imitate his example, and to walk in his footsteps. I have no other thought than to follow Jesus Christ as my General, and as the Prince and Ruler of penitence." *

M. de Sericourt was not sufficiently important for his retirement from the service to make a great sensation in society, but his share in his brother's eccentricities encouraged the Archbishop of Paris to express his disapproval of their conduct, and to command their withdrawal from the Faubourg S. Jacques, on the plea that their residence in the vicinity of the convent of Port-Royal was a cause of scandal. Saint-Cyran being lodged at Vincennes, the chief reason that kept Le Maistre in Paris was removed, but Port-Royal had its own fascination for him. The influence of Angélique and Agnès on his life was not as direct or as evident as that of Saint-Cyran, but it was not less definite. Without the thought of them, and that impression of their strong faith and unwavering practice with which he had grown up, it is improbable that he would ever have left the brilliant glare of the Palais for the obscurity of the Faubourg S. Jacques, and, finding himself ousted from the refuge he had chosen, he turned to the only other place which had associations that could help him.

* "Nécrologe de Port-Royal," vol. ii. p. 261.

Thus it came to pass that the solitude of Port-Royal des Champs was disturbed by the advent of those hermits who were destined to bring to it so large a measure of glory and disaster.

In due course the Archbishop learnt that the two brothers, and another devoted though youthful disciple of Saint-Cyran, Claude Lancelot, had retired from Paris and taken up their abode in the portion of the old convent of Port-Royal that was least ruinous, where they lived a life of great austerity and great discomfort, maintaining a self-imposed rule as strict as that to which obedience bound the monks of the Chartreux, but not aspiring to the priesthood. Their conduct might be the height of folly, but it contained no obvious suggestion of treason, either to Church or State, and as the personal influence of the Abbé de Saint-Cyran had, thanks to the wise intervention of Cardinal Richelieu, ceased to be a danger, there seemed to be no reason why the three fanatics should not be permitted to continue their uncomfortable practices amid the ruins of the deserted convent, until they wearied of the world's contemptuous neglect, and once more sought its notice. There was, in fact, no reason that the action of Le Maistre should have effects extending beyond his immediate family, and it is most unlikely that he himself ever formed the faintest conception of its actual result. He left Paris with a heart full of thankfulness for his brother's surrender, with many anxious thoughts turned towards the prison of Vincennes, and with some regret that he might no longer seek occasional encouragement from Angélique or Agnès Arnauld. But he was too much imbued with the spirit of Saint-Cyran to have any misgivings concerning the future. Solitude was his chief desire. He maintained it almost unbroken in those early days. At 2 a.m. he said matins with his two companions, and in the evening, because it was unwise to breathe no air but that of the marshy valley, they walked together on the hills near by, and permitted themselves to talk. Sometimes visitors would come from Paris, moved by curiosity, or in the vain hope of persuading M. Le Maistre to return and take his place in the Palais to plead a cause on their behalf. But Le Maistre would not see such intruders ; he seems

to have made no effort to enlist recruits, and to have been content that the world should think of him as dead.*

Unfortunately both for his individual tranquillity and for the comfort of peace-loving ecclesiastics, there were unexpected difficulties in proving any charge against the Abbé de Saint-Cyran. The prisoner had been arrested suddenly, and coffers full of papers were seized, but a lengthy examination failed to discover the proofs of heresy among them. Richelieu, though he was a despot and had absolute power to keep unruly subjects under lock and key so long as it might please him, was wise enough to realize that it was better policy to justify such drastic measures. There was a story whispered from lip to lip in Paris that the great Dutch General de Werth, who had chanced to visit Vincennes as well as the Louvre and the Palais Cardinal, and the other gay sights of Paris, had said ere he took leave, that to his thinking the strangest of his experiences was "to see Bishops at the Comedy, and Saints in Prison." It was patent to a man who knew his world as Richelieu did, that no deliberate memorial or petition of remonstrance on behalf of the imprisoned priest would be half as effectual or suggestive as that chance saying. He placed it in the category of those catch-words and doggerel rhymes that sway opinions which no argument can touch, and arbitrate when life and death swing in the balance. It was desirable, therefore, to decide the vexed question of Saint-Cyran's heresy, and to show that all connected with him were dangerous persons. Accordingly, the society that was beginning to forget La Maistre and his vagaries was reminded of him by the tidings that His Eminence's commissioners had been sent to Port-Royal des Champs to cross-examine the recluse, and probe for evidence of his exaggerated practices.

"Is it true, Monsieur," said the chief Commissioner, "that you see visions in your solitude?"

"Most true, Monsieur," was the courteous answer. "When I look out there"—and the hermit pointed to one of his two windows—"I see a vision of the village of Vaumurier. When

* "Nécrologe de Port-Royal," vol. ii. p. 40.

I look out there"—and he pointed to the other—"I see the village of S. Lambert. But these are the limits of my visions." *

It is unlikely that had Le Maistre desired to conceal anything, the Cardinal's emissary would have discovered it, seeing that a man's conversion would not rob him of his experience or make cross-examination a novelty to the foremost advocate of the Palais de Justice. In fact, however, Le Maistre had nothing to conceal. He was ready, openly, to stand or fall with Saint-Cyran, but, till Saint-Cyran was convicted, it was impossible to make friendship with him a criminal offence, and as Le Maistre did not either verbally or in writing preach doctrine of any kind to others, he was not an obvious danger to the peace of the Church. Nevertheless, the Cardinal, to whom experience had taught suspicion, could not leave him alone, and after one month of retirement, the hermits received notice to quit the desert places of Port-Royal des Champs. To M. Le Maistre the command indicated that he was under the ban of the Cardinal's displeasure, and it proved difficult for him to find another refuge. He possessed no property of his own, and therefore wherever he went he must dwell on the property of some other man. But to harbour one on whom the Cardinal frowned was too imprudent a step for a man of average caution, and so it came to pass that the culprit found himself an outcast and almost without shelter, although he was surrounded by people who had formerly delighted to do him honour.

His difficulties, like those of Saint-Cyran, were the means of increasing his influence to an incalculable degree, for nothing could have proved the reality of his convictions so decisively in the eyes of the world; moreover, by the solution of them it was destined that Port-Royal should aggregate new elements of strength, and be made known as a living power in places where formerly it had only been a name.

In the neighbourhood of La Ferté-Milon in Picardie, a man of sufficient courage to brave the Cardinal offered hospitality to M. Le Maistre and M. de Sericourt, and thither they retired

* N. Fontaine, "Suplément aux Mem.," part i.

to continue the routine of prayer and silence and study begun at Port-Royal. And their silence seems to have been more effectual than the speech of others. Le Maistre said once that it was their aim to carry out the maxim of S. Augustine, and rather to speak to God on behalf of men than to men on behalf of God, to be ardent in prayer instead of in argument.* The soundness of the maxim received signal proof at La Ferté-Milon. They lived in absolute seclusion, concealing even their names; they made no attempt to proselytise, but held upon their way in complete independence of any calculation of result. Yet, when on summer evenings they passed through the town on their way back to the house of M. Vitart, after a walk in the country, it is said that the townspeople with one accord bared their heads at their approach, and, when at length the Cardinal withdrew his prohibition and they were able to return to Port-Royal, their host could not be reconciled to the parting, and followed them thither, sharing their labours and deprivations with a sincerity of devotion that reflected their own.†

The silent witness of their lives was rich in suggestion, and the neighbourhood of La Ferté-Milon bore a great harvest of conversion to the doctrines of Port-Royal. It was then that the name of Racine was first linked to the monastery, and though the man who made it famous was not a type of vigorous loyalty, the story of his waverings and infinite distress of spirit bears its own peculiar testimony to the hold which Port-Royal assumed, as much over the weak as over the strong—a hold which, when once it had been recognized, it was impossible to ignore or to elude, although its recognition might imply destruction to every instinct of self-interest.

After his year of persecution, the former friends of Le Maistre seem wisely to have abstained from further effort to shake his resolve, but the cessation of argument and remonstrance did not mean oblivion. The animosity of Richelieu had recalled his

* Statement of Antoine Le Maistre, January, 1654. See "Nécrologe," vol. ii.

† Besoigne, "Hist.," vol. iii.

name to prominence in connection with that of Saint-Cyran, but it was no longer a theme for derision. Imperceptibly, scorn changed to reverence. It was recognized by those whose opinion claimed respect that Antoine Le Maistre was no mere charlatan, swayed by a passing impulse and throwing prudence to the winds to snatch sensation, but a man whose convictions were so far deeper than those of other men that they ceased to be themes for controversy, and became the springs of conduct. The fact that his convictions demanded such complete renunciation may have deterred many from contemplating them. The old warning of de Sales to Angélique, that it would be better to hook smaller fish and more of them, would have applied to the first of the hermits as well as to his kinswoman. And his indifference to it would have equalled hers. For to them both it seemed that the summons to be priest or nun or voluntary recluse, could not come from the lips of men, but must be always the call of God, so that refusal of obedience on the plea that the way was hard, was a proof of unworthiness. Actuated by a doctrine so forcible, both, by sheer force of personality and vigorous example, proclaimed, even to ears that grudged a hearing, that their experiment was not a failure, and that the call to them was not less a privilege because it had proved to be a call to suffering. As the months lengthened into years, and it grew evident that Antoine Le Maistre had never repented of his eccentric step, one and another of those who had known him by name and reputation would find, in the mere memory of him and the hidden life of which the ruined convent at Port-Royal was almost the only witness, a suggestion of unwelcome yet insistent thoughts. And after long resistance, the fact of Le Maistre and the daily practice of his life, as rumour spoke of it, acted as a magnet; and inquirers (quieting their own misgivings with the assurance that they were moved only by curiosity) would travel down to the wilderness of Port-Royal des Champs and seek the company of the King's Councillor, whose conversation had delighted them in former days.

The story of Victor Pallu, poet and physician, is typical. He came because Port-Royal and its message had called on him to

think. He was among the first in his profession, popular among clients of Court and city, eager in study, both of literature and science. He told Le Maistre in their first interview, that he intended to devote six days to meditation and self-discipline as practised by the hermits. Possibly he was impressed with the depth of his own aspiration, as denoted by so great a sacrifice. But Le Maistre received his announcement with composure. "If God has not sent you here, Monsieur," he said, smiling, "you will not remain six days, but if you really came at His bidding, six months will not suffice you." *

The result more than justified the saying, for Victor Pallu never left his anchorage at Port-Royal. Once penetrated by the conviction of sin, he could not return to the high seas of pleasure and temptation. "I knew that I was shipwrecked," he wrote to a friend; "only a plank was left to cling to, and that was penitence." †

He was only one among many. A desire for a few days in retreat from the ceaseless stir and excitement of life attracted men of divers callings, and it would seem that, in the quiet there, some of them were given unawares the glimpse of the Master which means destruction to contentment and complacency.‡ Priests who had been ordained without a vocation for their sacred calling hid themselves among the hermits unrecognized,§ that they might make atonement for the sin, which, to the Abbé de Saint-Cyran, seemed the deadliest in all the catalogue that called men to repentance. Five years after Antoine Le Maistre left Paris there were twenty hermits at Port-Royal, but neither the passing of the years nor the number of the company made the smallest difference in the rule with which their leader had begun. No appeal was made to the emotions, to sensationalism, to the more subtle elements of self-esteem. Their ideal was to be the practice of continual prayer: silence and self-denial their rule of life. They took no vows; Le Maistre said that obedience to the pledge given at baptism was sufficient, and he made no effort to

* "Nécrologe," vol. ii. p. 170
† Ibid., p. 243.
‡ Ibid., p. 170.
§ Ibid., vol. i. p. 140.

allure those who did not come of their own free will. His desire was to preserve the purity of intention which inspired them, and the reality of self-discipline and self-restraint which was the result of individual ardour.*

But, though they might honestly endeavour to shun the attention of the world, it is not astonishing that the wildest rumours concerning the Hermits were afloat, and Jesuit pamphlets referred darkly to the new community that had established itself, unlicensed by Church or King, to disseminate heresy among the faithful. It was well for them that there was always among them one at least who was amply equipped to defend them against such attack. Le Maistre suppressed his combative instincts when he renounced the world, but when occasion called for it, he could be roused to his old fire. To a definite accusation of illegal practices he made a definite answer, wherein there is less suggestion of meekness than of indignation, but which, nevertheless, sums up the spirit that animated both himself and his companions. "There is no institution for special discipline here," he wrote, "nor even a fixed place of abode; there is no Rule but that of the Gospel, no bond save that of the charity that is catholic and universal, no aim, individual or collective, save that of reaching Heaven. It is only a place of absolutely voluntary retreat, where no one comes unless he be led by the Spirit of God, and no one stays unless the Spirit of God retains him. Those who are here live together as friends by that common liberty of choice which the King permits to all his subjects. But they are Christian friends joined together by the Blood that Jesus Christ shed for all men, and which, by the Holy Spirit, has so filled their hearts that their union is closer, stronger, and purer than the deepest and firmest of earthly friendships." † If there was heresy and disloyalty in the practice of charity and self-denial, then, and then only, were the Hermits of Port-Royal guilty—that was his summing up.

Nevertheless, it is easy to see that the Hermits of Port-Royal were dangerous persons. Saint-Cyran's five years of imprisonment

* "Nécrologe," vol. ii.: "Recit. de M. Giroust."

† N. Fontaine, "Suplément aux Mem.," part ix.

had made the influence of his doctrine far stronger than before; his release did not weaken it; and at his death he left many disciples, declared and secret, to feed the lamps that he had lit. And his doctrine was not only damaging to all that was false in the power of the priesthood, it was also subversive of that blind confidence that supports the faith of the ignorant. Having believed that it was possible to shift responsibility and receive, through the agency of a priest, some soothing but inexplicable virtue that would condone the sins of the past without impeding the enjoyment of the future, the suggestion that definite personal effort was a necessity could not be received without a complete reconstruction of opinion, and in the process of reconstruction there was a risk that truth as well as error might be lost. The blame might be the due of those who were responsible for the error, but it was generally attributed to the reckless innovator who dragged the error into notice; and the impossibility of suppressing his suggestions greatly enhanced the indignation he inspired.

But the Hermits of Port-Royal one and all regarded the Abbé de Saint-Cyran as the chosen messenger of God. They were men of devoted life, and, many of them, of extraordinary gifts. Among their number were men of leisure and men of letters, merchants and physicians, priests, soldiers, and courtiers. When Saint-Cyran was dead they upheld his message with even greater ardour than in his lifetime, showing by hourly example that it was not a theological subtlety but a truth that the world needed. He had proclaimed that the sacrament of penitence was not merely a thing of formulæ and phrases, but the summons to contrition and amendment; and they gave form to theory by a self-renunciation so flawless, even in its peculiar element of independence, that a more perfect tribute to their prophet is inconceivable. The strongest of the Jesuits had failed to find disciples such as de Sericourt and Le Maistre, and Arnauld and Pascal, and it was little wonder if jealousy moved the great Order to exercise a little of their power to the detriment of the Community at Port-Royal, and to serve as a warning to all the votaries of the

new and dangerous creed of reality who looked for precept to Saint-Cyran, and to the nuns and hermits for example. It is not hard to find an explanation for the attempt to suppress forces such as centred at Port-Royal: in common prudence it was necessary; yet, could Saint-Cyran (with his ordinary callousness towards human suffering) have devised the means most calculated to bring his work to an enduring consummation, he could not have served that purpose better than by ordaining the persecution that was actually endured on his behalf.

Controversial questions might be made the peg for persecution:—the books of Arnauld or of Pascal, the old scandal of the Chapelet Secret or the Catechism of Saint-Cyran;—but its true root was not in these, the real ire of the world is not aroused by a mere appeal to intellect. It is from such lives as those of Angélique Arnauld and Antoine Le Maistre, and of the many to whom they served as models, that suggestions rise which infect the natural atmosphere of those who are content with the riches and pleasures of this world. Their attitude might be dubbed an affront to common sense, but their silent witness could not be confuted, and many an unwilling conscience received by them a message that was not the less insistent because unuttered.

CHAPTER VIII

ANGÉLIQUE IN PARIS

During the first years of Anne of Austria's regency Angélique had remained in Paris, much occupied with controversial questions which had become more heated after the death of Saint-Cyran, and were destined ultimately to bring her into personal touch with actual persecution. In 1642, while Richelieu still held his victim in durance at Vincennes, she had returned to her place as Abbess of Port-Royal. For twelve years she had been out of office, and had had ample opportunity to learn the lesson in humility that she had always hoped to find from a subordinate position. That twelve years contained the episode of the Institution of the Order of Adoration, one of the dominant experiences among those that formed her character. Through the suffering and infinite anxiety that it entailed she found eventually a peace that had hitherto been lacking to her, and her community became the richer by reason of its failure under its first conditions. When the nuns withdrew from their ill-chosen dwelling near the Louvre, and renounced the distinctive rule and dress that at first had been their temptation and their glory, they did not abandon the aspiration that was their original source of being, but shared it with their sisters at the mother-house, so that the nuns of Port-Royal became thenceforward the nuns of the Blessed Sacrament, consecrated, one and all, to the maintenance of the Perpetual Adoration for which Angélique had already braved so much.* Her outward difficulties were lightened after that

* The Papal Brief sanctioning this special devotion of the nuns of Port-Royal was granted in 1647, nine years after the abandonment of the new Institution. See Fontaine, "Mem.," vol. i. p. 37.

decisive step, and the conditions which made daily experience difficult to support when Sebastien Zamet ruled the community through Geneviève le Tardif, never recurred. Even before the arrest of Saint-Cyran, the nominal office of Director to the nuns had been assigned to M. Singlin, a man who was as definitely "the servant of God" as the great Jansenist himself, who cherished the doctrines which the nuns of Port-Royal had embraced so eagerly, but who was, nevertheless, an individual figure having his own especial place among the influences surrounding Angélique and her sisters, and not merely a reflection of their prophet.

The element of the divine in spiritual direction was exemplified by M. Singlin far more forcibly than it could ever be by the Abbé de Saint-Cyran; for, while the latter had been formed by years of close study and by intimate association with one of the most powerful intellects of his generation, and was himself possessed of very remarkable mental capacity, M. Singlin was a bourgeois of merely average gifts, with no claim derived from personal attainment to admonish or advise such spirits as Angélique Arnauld or Antoine Le Maistre. He had begun life as door-keeper in a shop in Paris, and his vocation for the sacred ministry was the discovery of Vincent de Paul, whose own origin was equally obscure. In a sense he never rose above his disabilities. Angélique, who held him in profound reverence, said that "he thought like one of the Fathers of the Church and expressed himself like a shop-boy." * Assuredly he could not stimulate the intellect of his flock as did Saint-Cyran, and would have been utterly incapable of winning the contest against Zamet whereby the possibility of peace was secured for la Mère Angélique. But, once the field was won, M. Singlin was specially competent to establish what another had devised. He was ready to defer and yield to Saint-Cyran at any point, but he realized with peculiar fulness the deep principle of the Abbé's teaching on direction—that those whose mission it was to lead towards Jesus Christ must see to it that no thought of the guide shadowed

* "Vies Intéressantes de Port-Royal," vol. i. p. 383.

the vision of the Goal; that the strength imparted must be that strength of God which gives independence of support from man.* M. Singlin's aptitude for self-effacement furthered his efforts to realize his ideals, the impression of him in the records of Port-Royal is as a voice rather than as a personality, and the comparative calm that reigned there in the years that intervened between the arrest of Saint-Cyran and the War of the Fronde may justly be attributed to him.

That period of calm was a needful preparation for the strain her country's suffering imposed upon la Mère Angélique, and in itself it was by no means unfruitful. The influence of Port-Royal was not less deep when it was unsensational, and the years in the Faubourg S. Jacques, when the excitement and distress for which Zamet was responsible were over, gave Angélique leisure to win that hold over others which she was so well able to develop for the greater glory of God. Both within the convent and without, the spirit of her faith was communicated to all who were led, by the gift of grace, to listen to her, and she, being what she was, could touch a region of experience in other women which was beyond the reach of the most discriminating priest. The letters of la Mère Angélique to her sisters of Port-Royal display an extraordinary insight into those subtleties of self-deception to which women in every age are prone. There was a certain virile quality in her own nature that should have lifted her above the weaknesses which dog the steps of other weary pilgrims, but, had it been so, she would have been less able as a guide to them. It is possible that she learnt more in this connection by her experience of Sebastien Zamet and his effect upon herself, than by any precept of S. Francis or Saint-Cyran. Her faculty of introspection was life-giving, her spiritual growth was nourished by it, self-contemplation was no danger to her advance, but her relentless scrutiny and judgment of herself revealed to her truths that bore on natures less balanced than her own. In herself she saw that outward impressions had been most powerful when least recognized, that the tendency to pose

* Lancelot, "Mem. de Saint-Cyran," vol. ii. p. 395.

(no less inherent in a nun than in a Court beauty or a precieuse) was a pressing danger, and continually gave birth to the spurious spirituality which it became more and more her mission to combat as life advanced. Many years before, S. Francis * bade her take no heed to the fine construction of her letters, for he did not desire any splendid building, any exalted language, "but the nest of the dove and words of charity;" he told her he could see the entanglement of vanity impeding her, the futility of many of her aims, and, above all things, he urged simplicity upon her, the simplicity of love. It was her strenuous endeavour to cherish that injunction and make it the tradition of Port-Royal; and for that object it was necessary that her eyes should pierce the surface sanctity and be specially unsparing to the weakness that was not self-evident.

Her view of her responsibility as Superior was overwhelming. "It is our duty to strengthen souls of whatever kind, being careful neither to neglect nor to over-press them. We must not despair of any, neither must we put too much confidence in the good inclinations even of the best, but watch unceasingly over all alike, praying that God will sustain those who are upright, will take pity on the weak and raise them up, and teach us how we may be of most service to all in all patience and diligence." †

"We must not put too much confidence in the good inclinations even of the best." This is the word of wisdom which many a devoted Mother-Abbess, many a discreet and spiritual Director, might have laid to heart with advantage to their usefulness. In the world and in the convent the danger of false sanctity (which has more exterior impressiveness than any practices common to honest souls) was especially marked at that period. And Port-Royal, in spite of its claim to suppress all that was emotional, was not exempt from the poisonous influence that infected Court and City and Convent chapel almost equally. Angélique was painfully alive to the symptoms, and utterly intolerant of them. Probably there was no sin which she found so difficult to forgive, because it aped all that she held most sacred.

* June, 1619.

† "Lettres," vol. i. No. 109.

Sometimes, indeed, in her "Relation" and in her Letters her feelings on this head overmastered her habit of self-control, and give us a glimpse of the passionate impetuous woman that Jaqueline Arnauld would have been but for the change in name and nature effected by Religion. "I cannot endure the false devotion which looks perpetually for pretexts to hide pride and self-interest," she says; "the sacrifice that pretends to be to God is really to self-complacency. When our deeds are weighed in the scales of the sanctuary and tried by fire, then they will be seen as they are, and the secrets of the heart revealed." *

It is easy to feel the impatience vibrating in every word, to see how hardly she might check the sharp rebuke, the scornful saying that hypocrisy invoked, the infinite antagonism of her whole nature to "all false ways." Yet condemnation of others always claimed from her a swift glance of self-scrutiny. She can look on to the day when the frauds, that were so deceptive to the world and to her eyes so evident, shall be "weighed in the scales of the sanctuary," and predict the turn of the scale with an eagerness that suggests satisfaction. But the inevitable afterthought comes quickly. "No one has more reason to dread that day than I," † she says. It is by such touches that we come to knowledge of that strange strong woman who won and wielded greater power from behind the grille than was ever achieved by any one of the high-born wantons of the Fronde. When she judged others—and she rarely did so—she made atonement by her savage judgment on herself. Humility with her meant despondency. The periodical awakenings to a sense of sin to which a soul that aspires must be subject, induced in her a trembling apprehension that she had proved herself unworthy of the grace on which attainment rested, and had lost it. True peace, the peace of the life that is hid with Christ in God, was never hers—except as a most transient experience—in this world. For this reason the impression of her becomes more melancholy as we grow closer to her. If we would see the joy of the fellowship of Christ consciously realized, we may look to Agnès

* "Lettres," vol. ii. No. 430. † Ibid.

Arnauld, to Anne Eugenie or Marie-Claire, to Antoine Le Maistre, or to many another whose feet were set upon the path Port-Royal had laid down. But in Angélique we must face the other aspect of that creed which had indeed been innate in her before the coming of Saint-Cyran. Because self-esteem was to her an ever-present instinct, she seized on the extreme of self-abasement, and self-abasement too often hid the vision of Love from her straining eyes; and left her to do battle with an overwhelming dread that ignored the reconciliation without which the deepest penitence misses its fruit.

She was not blind to the existence of the flaw that cost her agony unspeakable. We may see her best, in those years in Paris, by the light of her own revelation of herself. To Mme. de Chantal she could write without the reservation that it was necessary to preserve with others—her great desire was to declare herself to the friend she trusted absolutely, and so, in a passionate outpouring, she has left all unwittingly for future generations, the picture of that battle-field of strong resolve and opposing impulse which her inner life presented to the end of its earthly term.

"I am to be pitied, ma mère, because I am still unfaithful, still in opposition to His grace. I cannot tell you how much I suffer. I know that at heart I have not truly yielded to God, but am always obeying self-interest, never making a thorough resistance that I may attain perfect submission to God, so that I feel my whole life is simply deception and hypocrisy. And therewith my fear of God is cringing and horrible, and I have such dread of death and of hell that it seems to me that I have no true love or confidence in Him at all. It seems to me that all I do, in word and deed, comes from the lips only and from self-esteem, because I know it should be done, not by the prompting of grace. And in spite of this I am at peace and too cheerful. Levity continually obliterates my real feelings, which are less painful when I am unhappy. I would rather be in distress than in false contentment. I beseech you, my very dear mother, to pray that God may have pity on me, and that He will

break down all my opposition to His grace at whatever cost. It seems to me that I need greatly to be humiliated and confounded, yet I am fearful that this should come to pass, and shrink from it continually. God knows my need, and can fulfil it in spite of myself." *

If la Mère Angélique seems to us sometimes a forbidding figure by reason of that rigorous crucifixion of all human desires which was her constant practice, she is exonerated by the self-revelation that declares her passionate longing for an ideal that was unattainable, the fierce repudiation of content with anything short of perfection, and the consequent despair inseparable from self-scrutiny. Exaggerated she may have been often, but the supreme truth of her aspirations are never more visible than when she inveighs against her own hypocrisy. The longing that entails such constant and overwhelming fear as haunted her is not the ideal condition of the aspiring soul; it means unrest where peace should be, and apprehension in place of love, but it is most surely a *real* condition, and in her it is the explanation of the sadness that characterizes her in every stage of her life's journey. Not for her were the periods of ecstasy that lightened the way for others. Agnès and Marie-Claire were conscious of the joy of their vocation, but with her the shadows hardly lifted, and she battled through them, armed with a faith whose strength seems out of due proportion to her equipment of hope and love. One must needs shrink from contemplating that weary climb up a path from which the light was all excluded, but, while we deplore the element of narrowness in a nature that could hold one weapon like a vice, but could never use the others (which would have done her more than equal service) to their full measure of perfectness, we cannot withhold from it a tribute of admiration. For the struggle in the dark demands courage of a kind that few possess; to have ceased to press forward would have necessitated the losing of the way, and, through the long years from her hour of summons till her death, in spite of all her failures, of her moments of despair, of her ferocious self-contempt and grim self-criticism,

* "Lettres," vol. i. No. 67.

Angélique never really lost her way, nor ever grew forgetful that it was her part to draw others to tread it with her.

Perhaps her own secret bitterness of spirit increased her capacity for guiding others; by her means they sometimes found, indeed, more than their guide was ever granted, and she, with a sort of wistful indignation, repudiates the esteem with which she was cherished in so many hearts. "If I was like my sister Anne-Eugenie," she said to Le Maistre, "I would forgive people for showering all this excessive affection on me. I only become angry at it, because I am accredited with that for which God uses me. What I am as Superior is what He makes me for their guidance; it does not mean that I am sanctified, it is here that my sisters are so mistaken. They imagine that all the good deeds which God causes to be done by a Superior that that sacred charge may fulfil its purpose and be of use to the souls under control, are infallible evidence of the goodness of the Superior herself, which is utterly false. An Abbess may have more wisdom and enlightenment for guidance than any of her nuns, and yet be the least holy in the Monastery." *

Yet in spite of her denial of responsibility, Angélique the guide and helper of her sisters, is the same sad, earnest woman who fought out her own life-battle at Port-Royal, and her teaching of the religious life was the teaching of experience as well as of inspiration. The degree to which this was so she hardly knew herself, perhaps; but those who listened, while they recognized that it was given to her to hold the Divine commission, were drawn to her at first because she was herself the being God's Hands had fashioned with the tools of Pain and Humiliation and Discouragement, and brought to such completeness that her presence in the world won souls for Him.

"So ignorant was I," wrote a novice of Port-Royal, "that I summed up all in outward things, thinking it was enough if I was truly modest, obedient, pious, and apt and eager in mortification of the flesh. She (la Mère Angélique) talked to me often, and instructed me in the true spirit of the Religious. She showed me

* "Relation de la Mère Angélique," Entretien 40.

my error, telling me that its spirit lay in inward mortification, and in the sacrifice of our will that we must make continually to God. As I listened it seemed to me that God Himself spoke to me, for she had a special gift for reaching the heart and convincing the reason." *

That unassuming record is suggestive. The standard which makes so little count of piety and modesty and obedience and eagerness in self-mortification is not an easy one, yet it would seem that Angélique had such "a special gift for reaching the heart," that she could be fearless in making her demands. And she made them in all directions, for the scope of her influence was marvellous, but perhaps its most remarkable characteristic is its effect in her own family. The vocation of Angélique for the religious life was less decided than that of Agnès, but without its manifestation it is most improbable that either of her sisters would ever have discovered the meaning of the religious life at all. The fourth of the Arnauld daughters, Anne-Eugenie, who was one of the most perfect nuns that Port-Royal ever produced, would assuredly have married and lived in the gay world if the haunting recollection of her sister's standards of poverty and obedience had not claimed her for religion at the eleventh hour. One by one the daughters of Arnauld d'Andilly, after school days spent (more or less restively) under the supervision of their aunts, turned away from the attractions that the world offered them freely, and returned to ask humbly for the habit. One or two did not accept the yoke till after long delay. But in the end all came, and at one moment thirteen descendants of Antoine Arnauld, advocate, wore the veil within the cloister of Port-Royal. The magnetic strength of the summons to these young souls is infinitely striking. In view of the monotonous routine of self-denial that was maintained, it is miraculous that they did obey it whole-heartedly; but the surrender of another soul, made captive in the name of Christ by Angélique, was a far higher tribute paid to the convincing power of her life than theirs.

* "Vies Edifiantes," vol. i.: "Relation de la Sœur Marguerite du S. Esprit."

In early days the young Abbess of Port-Royal had sought, but sought vainly, for help and sympathy from her mother in the desperate undertaking which destiny demanded of her. Mme. Arnauld's opposition to the reform that meant defiance of parental discipline was, in its way, as difficult to combat as the more definite method employed by her husband. She had not the trust in her daughter's integrity of purpose that was the main reason for M. Arnauld's effort at reconciliation, and her dealings with the rebellious Abbess, for many years, even when peace was restored, appear to have been somewhat invidious. On the terrible Journée de Guichet we know that she swore impulsively that she would never cross the threshold of Port-Royal again. She suffered greatly in consequence, and went through much disturbance of spirit, torn by a real affection for her daughters and a regard for the binding nature of an oath, until a sermon that she heard in Paris inspired her with the idea that she might be dispensed from a vow that had been made in haste and under impulse. But, though in effect the oath only divided her from Angélique for a year, the fact that she had made it shows the reality of the spiritual division between them. Assuredly Angélique did not derive her instinct of piety from her mother, and she learnt that she must not look to her for support in those deeply searching reforms that occupied her youth. Mme. Arnauld—whose descendants strangely united under one banner are so extraordinarily impressive—was by no means remarkable herself. She was a competent house-wife, and regulated the domestic affairs of the convent as well as her own establishment; she was the mother of a very numerous family, and lived in intimate and affectionate relations with them and with her husband; she was, moreover, a dutiful daughter of the Church, but one of those who considered that individual reflection on the practices in which she had been brought up was both unnecessary and undesirable. Angélique's innovations were possibly more offensive to her than they would have been to one who scoffed at religion, but she was by no means impervious to the verdict of the world, and when the world learnt to applaud the gallantry of the solitary

pioneer at Port-Royal, she smiled on much that she had disapproved when left to herself. She was, in short, absolutely conventional; but maternal authority had great weight in that grade of society to which the Arnaulds belonged, and Angélique made no pretence of underrating it. The unruliness of her girlhood developed into resolute purpose when her inner life outgrew the dominion of unguided impulse, but in both conditions her relations with Mme. Arnauld seem to have had an element of difficulty resulting from the instinct of interference natural to the mother, yet incompatible with the peculiar position of the daughter. Had Angélique and her mother moved hand-in-hand from the first moment of the former's conversion, the sequel would be less amazing; but in view of the evident friction that in some degree survived the family reconciliation, the vocation of Mme. Arnauld makes its own peculiar appeal to the imagination. For Mme. Arnauld also—with her long record of well-spent days, of duties adequately fulfilled, of well-deserved success in the sphere to which Providence had called her—she, the middle-aged matron, bowed her neck to the yoke of subjugation, at which her own grandchildren, accustomed to obedience from their babyhood, sometimes shrank back affrighted.

In 1623 Angélique had sought her mother's help in the difficult task of conveying the contingent of novices from Maubuisson to Port-Royal. Mme. Arnauld provided the necessary carriages, but in her heart she was more in sympathy with Mme. de Soissons than with her daughter. Her business instinct resented the quixotic generosity that would claim no dower even when it might have been paid. She thought that Angélique allowed herself to be imposed upon, possibly it increased her irritation to reflect on the amount of Arnauld money that was dedicated to Port-Royal, and therefore to the support of nuns who would not have gone empty-handed to any other convent.

Angélique was quite unmoved by any remonstrance on such points. Her soul was above sordid calculations; she, who gave herself in full measure and esteemed herself privileged in so doing, disdained to combat meanness that would fain withhold the dues

of the Church. Gold given grudgingly was not worthy of the coffers of Port-Royal. "Believe me," she wrote once to the Abbess of Gif, "the religious make a great mistake when they permit themselves a fear of future want, and take such heed of their goods; the way to real poverty is the dread of being poor and the disinclination to receive those who have a veritable call but no money."* She never wavered from that view, but Mme. Arnauld's experience repudiated such unpractical methods, and her disapproval, though not openly expressed, rankled in her mind. But perhaps the disturbance it cost her aided the other impressions that, since her husband's death (which occurred while Angélique was at Maubuisson), had imperceptibly been gaining ground. An insistent thought may produce a result that seems directly contrary to its character; doubtless Mme. Arnauld had repeatedly run through the whole gamut of disapproval and argument and exasperation at her daughter's vagaries, and the time had come when a fresh note must be struck. Angélique's folly was obvious, but long contemplation of it suggested that it was neither heedless nor inconsistent with the rest of her theories, and a certain awe of her own child crept into the heart of Mme. Arnauld. She came more and more frequently to Port-Royal des Champs; she was present at a profession, and the sermon seemed to sum up the suggestions that haunted her day and night. She went into retreat, choosing to have no other direction than that of Angélique herself, and finally, as a crowning act of humility, she besought that she might become a novice where her daughters held authority. She gave her worldly goods to the Community, and passed her last fourteen years in the habit of a nun, conforming to the outward rule and to the inward spirit of the religious life as enjoined by la Mère Angélique, with a singleness of mind which many of her companions, whose vocation had grown with them from their childhood, could not have rivalled.

Even at Port-Royal there is no stranger type of the upheaval of convention, and of ordinary standards wrought by the call of

* "Lettres," vol. ii. No. 503.

Christ, than the vocation of Mme. Arnauld. Had she remained in the world, she would (by right of the work her sons and daughters were accomplishing) have been a personage; her wealth and influence must have claimed respect from society; and her character earned her care and reverence from her own family. But, after 1629, when in February she made her profession, we hear no more of la Sœur Catherine de Saint-Felicité until her death-bed scene. Willingly she died to the world; and the children who loved her believed that they could give no deeper proof of love than in aiding her to renounce all that divided her from her Master, and leaving her to pursue the path of submission and arduous self-denial that led to Him.

After that wonder, it seems but a matter of course that Catherine Le Maistre should follow the same path when her widowhood left her free to do so. She had made a most unhappy marriage, and was passionately attached to Angélique; for her there was no old tradition of opposing wills to overcome, nor had she known the prosperity that had warmed the youth and middle life of Mme. Arnauld. Her life in the world was lived for others; she tended the sick, and would fain have adopted every neglected child she saw. Her deep pride in her sons was dissevered from their triumphs in the world, and only reached fulfilment when de Sericourt and Antoine Le Maistre had discarded their brilliant prospects, and de Saçi * was recognized as a true and worthy disciple of Saint-Cyran. Yet when we remember that she came to middle age by a way of continual self-abnegation, that she was the acknowledged benefactor of the poor and the unhappy, using her time and money untiringly in their service, and finding also many unexpected ways of helping her sisters of Port-Royal when difficulties pressed upon them; when we recognize the definite use of her life, evident to herself as to others,—it would be false to imagine that the vocation which summoned her to take the veil was less imperative than that which called the vain and self-indulgent. Self-love has no more insidious form than the self-importance of the benevolent; and there

* Isaac Le Maistre de Saçi, 1613–1684.

is no more specious argument against the reality of self-surrender than that which is based on the idea of personal service. Mme. Le Maistre took an extraordinary pleasure in being of use to everybody. 'No one was ever more worthy of riches, for she had no other use for them save to distribute them where she knew they were most needed." * That is the testimony of one witness, and many could attest it, for it seemed to all who knew her that Catherine Le Maistre filled her place in the world to the glory of God and the good of her fellow-creatures. She must, therefore, have experienced the joy of well-doing, of seeing work accomplished that without her would have been left undone. And when her husband died the need of her did not lessen. It would have been easy to continue in that generous giving out of all she was and all that she possessed, which hitherto had been her response to the call of Christ; and such a choice must have possessed strong attractions for one whose greatest happiness was to lessen the suffering of others.

Nevertheless, Catherine Le Maistre became a novice at Port-Royal de Paris in her first year of widowhood, and was professed immediately after the death of Marie-Claire. Saint-Cyran was in prison at Vincennes, yet the call to Catherine and her response owe their definiteness to his teaching. No man was ever more fearless in approaching the difficult question of human relations to the purposes of God than was Saint-Cyran. "Mourir à la bonne œuvre," was a maxim of his.† According to his teaching, the servant of God must be independent of result. He must not desire a task that was not plainly given him to do, be the need for its accomplishment ever so apparent. Definite service required special submission in the spirit that "ever seeketh not to serve God more (which meaneth otherwise) than as God please." "Il n'en faut jamais entreprendre aucune bonne œuvre de nous mêmes; et ce que nous ferions de bien ne plairait point à Dieu si Dieu ne le voulait point de nous." ‡

* Lancelot, "Mem. de Saint-Cyran," vol. ii. p. 225.
† Besoigne, "Hist. de Port-Royal," vol. iii.: "Esprit de Saint-Cyran."
‡ Ibid.

Thus Saint-Cyran dragged out relentlessly that cherished failing of the conscientious (so difficult to touch because so constantly unrecognized): the honest love of service which diverts the servant from the thought of the master, and is at variance with the pliancy of real surrender because in it self-devotion has become welded with self-esteem.

"Ce que nous ferions de bien ne plairait point à Dieu si Dieu ne le voulait point de nous." That was the special lesson for Catherine Le Maistre, and, though in the eyes of the world it might be incomparably easier than that which was set to the woman of fashion who sought for peace of mind in the solitude and monotony of Port-Royal, it had its own peculiar bitterness. Look where we will among those lives that were drawn to Angélique and to Port-Royal, the leading tone is the tone of pain. Port-Royal had no cushions for the knees of penitents, no schemes for lightening the yoke of Christ. "The road that leads to life is very narrow," wrote Angélique, unflinchingly; "the cross that our Lord Jesus Christ commands us to bear after Him is very painful to the flesh. It is therefore folly to imagine that we can proceed along the narrow path to Heaven thus loaded, without suffering. Nevertheless, we are so unreasonable that we desire to go without difficulty. It is an absurdity. God will not change His laws for us. We must make up our minds to choose the pain and bitterness of our Lord's cross in this world, or damnation in the next. The hardness of our hearts requires us to think of this frequently that fear at least may stimulate us." *

It is a cruel creed thus stated, and Angélique never tried to soften it. Assuredly her harshness was no matter of policy, for it was part of herself, and became more and more ingrain as she grew older; but, if it be permissible to reflect on the great Purpose behind Port-Royal, it seems as if the very trait which repels in retrospect was needed at the moment. In every part of the picture of those times there are strong effects of light and shade, and the excess of levity and of self-indulgence was confronted by an

* "Lettres," vol. i. No. 70.

embodiment of penitence and of self-mortification, as intemperate and as unreasoning as itself. Violence demanded violence, and Port-Royal was ready when the reaction from the ungovernable passion of the Fronde began. But it was necessary first that Angélique, standing as the type of Port-Royal before the eyes of her generation, should display the unbending quality of iron, and hold relentlessly to the terrifying formula which alone, it seemed, could reach the stiff-necked crowd.

Yet despite the element of savagery in that choice betwixt present bitterness and future damnation which she held out, it is easy to see the fascination of its accompanying "theory of irresistible grace." Accept the bitterness, yield utterly, and thenceforward misgivings might be silenced; for God in the present obliterated sin in the past. No wonder that the brilliant dames, from whom the joy of youth was fleeing, cast questioning longing glances towards a haven that offered safety. The fact that a summons thither echoed in their hearts—it seemed—implied that the grace which was the treasure of Port-Royal was offered them; and, when the delight of personal triumph crumbled beneath their touch (as, sooner or later, it was sure to do), there was unspeakable consolation in the different hope that their first clutching at the other possibility afforded them. The test came, of course, only at close quarters. Angélique called from Port-Royal with an insistence which was involuntary and of which she was not conscious; for the greater the luxury and waste that prevailed in those wild days of Anne of Austria's Regency, the more impressive was the rigid self-abnegation of Port-Royal. But the full meaning of that summons could not be revealed at once. Response might be given willingly enough, but response was little without perseverance, and perseverance in its ordinary development meant renunciation of every indulgence that made existence endurable. It was the first axiom of direction at Port-Royal that that which had been abused must be used no longer. M. Singlin and M. de Saçi, each in turn, adhered to it as firmly as Saint-Cyran himself, and their demands were extraordinarily searching. Only a few indeed could face them, and there is food

for reflection in the record of the hesitations, impulses, resolutions, and backslidings of the many who were found wanting.

Elsewhere perhaps they may, some of them, have found a gentler ordinance and sought a mercy wider than that which Angélique or Saint-Cyran pictured; but in this present life they could have no part nor lot with Port-Royal if the flesh proved too weak to respond fully to its claim. For at Port-Royal there was no room for caprice, no pandering to soft susceptibilities. The call to follow God entailed the setting down of every impediment that had been self-assumed. The motto adopted by de Saçi,* and given originally by Saint-Cyran to Le Maistre,† "Dépendre de Dieu, s'humilier et souffrir," represented the necessary rule of every day for nun and hermit, and the penitence of the worldling was not veritable if his or her dependence and humility and willingness to suffer was not, in intention, just as great as theirs.

To women the attraction of contrast is especially great, but a large proportion of the women who tampered with the strong doctrine of Port-Royal recoiled when its harsh reality grew clear, and knew themselves too weak in purpose to fulfil what it required of them. Angélique and Agnès in their differing ways strove hard for the waverers, but, for a woman of that brilliant world, it required a miracle of grace to subjugate her being, and the miracle, when wrought at all, was wrought when she first listened to the summons. The men, less swift in answering, showed themselves often to have been really faithful when they seemed the prey of uncertainty and calculation. Many of those brief dramatic stories preserved among the records of Port-Royal bear testimony to the protracted struggle that preceded the silent penitence of the hermit, and was the price of ultimate peace. Among Angélique's letters—almost as much as among those of Saint-Cyran—we see to what degree personal influence bore a part in the work of grace. Comparatively the

* "Nécrologe," vol. i. p. 2.

† "S'humilier souffrir et dépendre de Dieu est toute la vie chrétienne, si on fait ces trois choses continuellement et tous les jours avec joie et tranquillité au fond de l'ame" (N. Fontaine, "Mem.," vol. ii. p. 45).

part was small, yet Angélique had the power of consolidating the aspirations that were floating and formless, by a few stringent words that brought the ideal and the concrete into touch, and suggested that visions were worthless if they went no deeper than the brain. Her estimate of human nature was a low one, and she was always perfectly frank about it. "Je ne m'imagine point que mes amis soient saints," she wrote to one friend who was a priest, "je sai trop la grande difficulté qu'il y a de le devenir."* It was said of her by her sister-in-law, Mme. d'Andilly, that she "was like the angels, terrifying at first and consoling afterwards,"† and the saying is apt and in complete accordance with her aim. She did not desire to conciliate, but where there was courage to brave her pitiless scrutiny she could offer a fund of inspiration.

It is noticeable that the tie of blood did not soften the inflexible demand she made. Among her kindred she was regarded with awe that affection could not mitigate; Saint-Cyran himself seemed to some to be easier of approach. Antoine Le Maistre gives a remarkable instance of this, for he must have had a strong affinity to his aunt, and we know that he was very dear to her, and that the thought of his vocation was one to which she turned with unspeakable relief. Nevertheless, he feared her as he feared no one else. He said he "could not open his mind to her, that the vehemence with which she spoke silenced him."‡ That there was a quality of violence in her cannot be doubted, but conceivably it was necessary as a component part of the force required for her life work, and it is clear that to d'Andilly, for instance, her unshrinking strength offered a pillar of support, by help of which his adaptable and complex character won leisure to ripen into a reflection of her ideal of spiritual development.

Arnauld d'Andilly was one of the captives of whom Port-Royal had most reason to be proud. The chameleon quality of his appearance in so many pictures of the time, adds a peculiar

* "Lettres," vol. i. No. 74 (to M. Macquet).

† Lancelot, "Vie de Saint-Cyran," vol. i. p. 325 (note).

‡ To la Sœur Angélique de S. Jean: see Fontaine, "Mem.," vol. iii. p. 232.

interest to the process by which he came to his place among the hermits. Saint-Cyran himself has not been more variously represented than d'Andilly, but there is more justification for differing estimates of the brilliant courtier than of the priest. For d'Andilly endeavoured to be all things to all men in a sense that would not have been sanctioned by S. Paul; he was a dilettante on one side of his nature, a devotee on the other. The conflict between inclination and aspiration lasted almost as long as his life, and the alternations of mastery were evident to the world. As a result, his character has become the prey of disputants, and at the end of that century, when the fight betwixt Jansenist and Jesuit raged hotly, a man's estimate of d'Andilly would have served as a clue to his theology. At this distance of time, when warring opinions have found another field, it is easier to attempt judgment. The existence of strong religious bias in the man cannot be denied; it brought him finally to Port-Royal and the rule of the hermits,* but that he was of those who seemed to be formed for the world and to inhale the love of it with every breath, is quite as evident. We see him at the Court, and he is plainly in his element; he was the friend of Monsieur, the King's brother, and, by modern standards at least, Monsieur was no friend for an honest man. He won and kept the favour of Richelieu, and those who prized integrity above self-interest and expediency could rarely keep the favour of the Cardinal. His great ambition was to be tutor to the Dauphin who was so soon to be a King, and he did not shrink from plunging into the midst of the temptations, distractions, and inevitable deceit that were inseparable from Court preferment. Amid the froth and bubble that travestied high aim and sober thought at the Hôtel Rambouillet he was at home, as no man could have been who had really taken to himself the deep maxims touching the seriousness of life, the terrific warnings as to its danger that Saint-Cyran instilled perpetually. Mlle. de Scudery drew him for posterity, and though at that moment her pen was dipped in venom, he had

* He retired from the world in 1645. See his letter to Le Maistre (N. Fontaine, "Mem.," vol. ii. p. 189).

enemies enough for the sketch to win applause. She shows him hurrying into the Chambre Bleue, knowing every one and expecting to be known by all, eager over trifles, full of the interest of the moment, confident of welcome everywhere because supremely confident in self. "He speaks a word to one, a word to another; he caresses two or three friends at the same moment; he stretches out a hand to one lady and whispers to a second; he talks openly to every one at once, and it may almost be said that he comes and goes among us when he really does not move, so careful is he to be in the good graces of all who approach him." *

Probably the resemblance betwixt the sketch and the original was undeniable, and the Rambouillet atmosphere was that in which d'Andilly could breathe most freely. The jests of Pisani and of Voiture, the answering mirth of Julie d'Angennes and Angélique Paulet, the frivolity which was the more extravagant because it managed always to be innocent and to retain a certain lustre of intellectuality—it was all familiar to him. Even in the echo of it all the charm is not completely lost to us, and a summons to follow the most volatile of all the Arnaulds into the presence of Arthenice, and share with him the joys for which he had so deep a capacity for appreciation, would not be all unwelcome.

But the Faubourg S. Jacques was within easy reach of the Hôtel Rambouillet, and for d'Andilly there was the continual sense of the existence of Port-Royal, and of Angélique waiting for him in a silence that, amid the clatter of his other life, was hard to realize. And in him there was the quality that responded to her, and both were conscious of it, he with misgiving, she with confidence. He tried to assure himself that his vocation was to be a beacon, lighting society towards Port-Royal; it was a pleasant rôle to one of his temperament, and he fulfilled it bravely; but Port-Royal allowed no bargaining; one might linger on the way, but one might not have the stony places smoothed, and d'Andilly knew that deep in his heart, beneath all the love of amusement and wit and self-advancement, there was an instinct that would

* "Clélie," vol. vi.

force him finally to give unreserved allegiance to Saint-Cyran and still the apprehensions of his sisters.

The moment of real decision came on him unexpectedly, while Richelieu and Louis XIII. were still alive, while Saint-Cyran languished at Vincennes, and Anne of Austria was still in the first flush of triumph over her son. It was known that d'Andilly coveted the charge of the future King, and he was well able to know the signs of the times, and both the predilections and the cunning of the Queen. Nevertheless, when she—in one of those dialogues so frequently recorded where every word of hers is interrogative—questioned him as to his opinion of Saint-Cyran, he answered boldly * that he loved him more than life, and looked upon him as a saint. The balance of his destiny dipped then once and for all on the side of Port-Royal. Close scrutiny of the circumstances brings with it that sense of the inevitable which is so often present in the history of the Arnaulds. D'Andilly ruined his most cherished hope when he acknowledged his love of Saint-Cyran to Anne of Austria, for already Jansenism and Saint-Cyran were words avoided by the prudent; and, superficially, he can be accredited with self-devoted loyalty. But in fact his adoption of any other course is inconceivable; he had known the imprisoned Abbé for nearly twenty years,† he had been the means of uniting him to Port-Royal, and la Mère Angélique had openly gloried in their friendship. He regarded himself as the representative of Saint-Cyran in the world, and undoubtedly he spread the knowledge of Port-Royal and its doctrines among men and women of fashion in a manner only possible to a man of his extraordinary versatility. In this lay his excuse and his defence; it enabled him to enjoy the life he loved without forfeiting the affection of his sisters, but, had he tampered with his profession of allegiance to Saint-Cyran, he would have found no mercy at the hands of Angélique. She had always mistrusted his endeavour to serve both God and Mammon; any compromise was at variance with her nature, and though she helped him in his work of conversion,

* "Mem. d'Arnauld d'Andilly," part ii. p. 125.

† Lancelot, "Vie de Saint-Cyran," vol. i. p. 281.

she was never more eloquent than when she pleaded with him for himself. Her whole heart then is in her argument. To great ladies or unworthy priests who appealed to her for counsel we find her wise, logical, and earnest, but to d'Andilly her pen was inspired by the eagerness of love. "After all, my most dear brother," she writes, when he was in the fullest enjoyment of his social capacities and successes, "what is this favor of the world? Even with all that you tell me about it (and perhaps in consequence of the ignorance which my most blessed seclusion entails, I am not able fully to understand its interest), it can only last for this life's span, and, unless I am very much mistaken, it does not aid us in reaching Heaven.

"The bustle of the Court, the endless opportunities it gives of trespassing against God, and the perpetual hindrances to thinking of Him only, need not, I know, check strong resolution or prevent souls that are absolutely consecrated to well-doing from yielding to God completely. But the best means of knowing if we have so yielded is to see whether no reverse of Fortune is able to disturb us. If that be so, we are happy continually, and it does not matter where we may be. Yet whatever gives the greatest freedom for seeking God must mean the most happiness.

"It is utterly false to make a plea of the glory of God and the benefit of other people. God is wiser and more careful of that which is for His glory than we can be, and we would do better to commend it to His care; His all-powerful Hand can counteract the misfortunes that we fear without our aid; all we need do is to adore His ordinances and yield to His Holy Will." * The letter is as suggestive of the character of the recipient as of the writer. He had such splendid aspirations, such a lofty standard, such a deep realization of the true spirit of religion, that, when they listened to him, neither Angélique nor Saint-Cyran could desire a better representative; but, when the uncompromising practical demand of the theories he could expound so glibly, came into question, that persuasive tongue of his

* "Lettres," vol. i. No. 7.

was ready with a dozen reasons for braving the dangers and tasting the sweets of the world from which he strove to summon others.

He shone especially in the society of ladies (of those fair ladies of the Fronde who surely needed some wise counsellor if they were to be withheld from mad excesses!), and he convinced himself that he would do wrong to neglect so obvious a mission. In fact, he did affect the conduct of more than one of them, and they were ready to humour him by going a little way at least towards reform in such good company. "I would implore you, if I dared," wrote Angélique, with singularly penetrating insight into the situation, "to beware of the advice of the prudent, *and of women*, but I might be offering injustice to your heart, which is a hundred times larger and truer than my own." *

There is a touch of comedy (not often to be found in connection with Port-Royal) about Arnauld d'Andilly and his mission to society. Most notable among his converts was Mme. la Princesse de Guemenée,† one of those dames of high degree who learnt at the Court of Marie de Medicis to spurn the bourgeois bonds of morality and conscience, and claim such licence as even the gay heroines of Brantôme's fancy could hardly emulate. She was a lady of great personal charm, and undoubtedly d'Andilly enjoyed his hours in her company, but her call to Port-Royal was not mere badinage. She knew Saint-Cyran by reputation, and though their mutual friend did not disguise that he would be unsparing, she applied to him for guidance. Doubtless she was weary of the excitement of which she had drunk so freely all her life; the bitterness of the other cup could not overwhelm the attraction of its novelty—there was a certain zest, indeed, in unaccustomed bitterness. The world was looking on, moreover, when she knocked at the convent door, and Mme. de Guemenée was of those who cannot easily dispense with the attention of the world. But, though the knowledge that she was a cause of excitement to her friends

* "Lettres," vol. i. No. 7.

† Anne de Rohan.

may have stimulated her renunciation, such knowledge did not exalt the position of Port-Royal in the opinion of society. Saint Évremonde, with the ruthless wit against whose darts all shams are powerless, said she had made "de dévotion le dernier de ses amours;" and such a phrase as that, when it is justified, is far more harmful than the violence of heresy.

D'Andilly, in his enthusiasm for his mission to society, would not admit misgivings, but la Mère Angélique lived too near reality to be hoodwinked. "It is far worse to amuse one's self with vain chatter of religion than with the amusements of the world," said she, "for thus one may believe one's self to be in the right path and be in an utterly wrong and mistaken one because we are profaning holy things. We see only too much of the evil that results from fine discourses of devotion."* Perhaps a thought of Zamet and the fictitious glamour he had known so well how to cast over an insecure but vehement profession, was in her mind; but she was content to refer the princess to Saint-Cyran and accept his fiat, judging truly that d'Andilly was too much influenced by imagination to be a guide for a woman of Mme. de Guemenée's temperament.† Nor was she sparing in effort herself, and there are letters of hers to her brother's convert which suggest that she modified her view in consideration of the princess's willingness to submit to Saint-Cyran, whose exactions from his prison were quite as searching as when he was face to face with his penitents.

Angélique never gave deeper expression to her assurance of the necessity and the all-conquering efficacy of Grace, than in a letter to Mme. de Guemenée, who was about to make a general confession. This letter may be regarded as a summing-up of Saint-Cyran's doctrine of penitence, showing its true meaning, its true reliance in Divine inspiration as the only source from which it could derive vitality. "Although you might pass a whole year in the closest self-examination, you would be without preparation (for confession) unless God had touched your heart

* "Lettres," vol. i. No. 88.

† Cf. Ibid., vol. i. Nos. 89, 159.

into true conversion," writes Angélique, "and I am not afraid to say that you would not have realized your faults to the degree that at this moment you do without any examination at all, while you lacked the grace that alone gives real self-knowledge. M. de Saint-Cyran required only that there should be dawn in a soul for confession, that is to say, a ray of grace that pierces the dead soul of a sinner and causes it to live with the life of grace." *

The real self-knowledge that was the gift of grace implied the real contrition whereby the dead soul of a sinner rose to new life. It was very simple to Antoine Le Maistre or Marie-Claire, it was simple also to some whose sins were as scarlet even in the eyes of others, but who were, nevertheless, privileged to learn the mystery of penitence that kept Port-Royal pure.

But Mme. de Guemenée fulfilled the original doubt of la Mere Angélique instead of the hope that succeeded it. De Retz, who was no less bitter and far more brutal than Saint Évremonde, chronicles the sequel to d'Andilly's conquest. He was himself avowedly the lover of Mme. de Guemenée, but at that moment he was passing through one of those strange revulsions which were inseparable from his contradictory conditions. For de Retz, though he was a cynic, was not an ingrain sceptic like Saint Évremonde; if he had not been a priest he might have been a faithful son of the Church; but, being a priest, and finding that the limitations his calling had imposed on him were intolerable, his life was a protracted struggle against all the codes of morals and expediency that had riveted the chains upon his wrists. Anne de Rohan held a longer sway over his affections than most of the beauties who had won them in succession, and he regarded the proceedings of d'Andilly with real indignation. "M. d'Andilly conjured up the devil to frighten his convert," he says: "M. d'Andilly was even more in love with her than I, but only purely and spiritually—in God. When my turn came I found a devil for her of more benign and pleasing aspect than his. At the end of six weeks I won her from Port-Royal,

* "Lettres," vol. i. No. 102.

where from time to time she had made retreats that were really only a sort of prank. Thus I stilled the chagrin that the reminder of my profession fostered in the depth of my heart." *

Such were the influences against which Port-Royal strove, and strove often in vain. The degradation of the sacred calling was the cause of the worst evils of the age, and the extravagance and exaggeration that were mingled with the attempts to lift it once again to heights of purity were only in proportion to the excesses that had hurled it down. During the years of her life in Paris, Angélique had experience of the social aspect of that degradation, and the social aspect was wholly different from that which affected monasticism. At heart she was as eager to convert society to Christianity as d'Andilly himself, and she found herself as persistently thwarted by the secular priests as in former times she had been by the religious when her aim was to reform her Order. Perhaps without the counter influence of that eminent ecclesiastic and future Cardinal, Jean François Paul de Gondy, Mme. de Guemenée might have ranked among the triumphs of Port-Royal, but her mental equilibrium was not proof against a subtlety of attraction which, while identifying itself with the whispers of her lower nature, had the support of a travesty of ecclesiastical authority that stilled some qualms of conscience. The world called to her, and Mme. de Guemenée allowed her eyes to dwell once more on the glitter of its excitements. In her heart she knew the glitter was of tinsel, but when she looked at Port-Royal, she could distinguish nothing to lure her to its shadowy silences. La Mère Angélique saw that the grace sufficient for her conversion was withheld, and she could only watch with pity while the unlucky lady slipped back into the morass of intrigue and sensuality from which she had been extricated, and make an occasional effort to defend her from the calumny of which she was the victim. "In truth the poor lady has sadly fallen and has returned to the world. Nevertheless, she is said to be far worse than she is. And this I take to be the just

* "Mem. de Cardinal de Retz," liv. i. (ed. 1777, Geneva).

judgment of God, her faithlessness being punished by slander. I still hope God will have pity on her and she will return. She always comes to the sermon, and I am told she was much impressed by the last, which was on Ascension Day. It is very easy to fall, and very hard to climb up again. But God can do all, and His mercy is infinite." *

It was thus that Angélique watched, eager to note the first spark of awakening grace, but quite convinced that no human individual effort availed anything. All that she said and did re-echoed that leading note. Whether she was concerned with saints or sinners, with the inner depths of spiritual life, or the visible convulsions of experience in the world, it is always the thought of saving grace as the one hope and the one remedy which underlies her discourse. And the appalling gloom of the thought is never absent. She waited expectant, but often it would seem she waited vainly. Mme. de Guemenée, for instance, never returned. The grace was lacking. Many another consulted Angélique and wavered on the threshold and fled, and she watched, and again and again decided that grace had been withheld.

"A few days ago," she wrote once to the Queen of Poland, "I was talking to two ladies who I could see had a great dislike to any hardship in life, and required every comfort and all those luxuries which afford the delight to the senses which we term innocent. While we talked, I was overcome with the pity which their regard for the good things of this world and their indifference to the delights and the deprivations of another inspired in me. Observing this, they asked me what I was thinking about, and I told them plainly that I thought they must have a great desire for Heaven and a great dread of Hell, as they disliked discomfort and loved ease so much. They thought my reasoning just; but it did not touch them really, nor did it touch me either, for I am, in my own way, equally wrapped up in the fulfilment of my own desires. Which thing showed me clearly that God only can touch our hearts, and that it is useless to be

* "Lettres," vol. ii. No. 648 (to the Queen of Poland).

convinced by human argument if we are not led by grace, and if the Holy Spirit does not direct our actions in accordance with our convictions." *

There—clear-cut, vigorous, concentrated—is the relentless creed of her later life, a creed that was so much too hard to suit her generous heart, and which was, nevertheless, as she was wont to state it, so strangely unanswerable. The great enigma of life, which in those violent years came closely home to all who dwelt in France, seemed to find solution in the dire theory of predestination, of grace withheld entirely from one, offered to another and refused, granted and thankfully accepted by a third. Once admit that answer and many difficult questions can be faced, many problems, utterly baffling otherwise, grow simple. And at Port-Royal, where none were met in daily intercourse save those who were among the elect, it was not impossible to theorize about the fate of a vast mass of human beings who had no actual identity. Angélique could always hope that grace might be given and received by those she knew, and in the contrast between the conditions, which to her seemed the sole training for salvation, and those common to the majority of her fellow-creatures, she either lost the sense of fellowship, or did not produce her theory to its full logical sequel of comprehensive condemnation.

Perhaps while she threatened and exhorted sinners (and herself as chief among them) she had an underlying sense that, at the end of argument and logic and conviction, there remained Something stronger than all. That—though the few whom grace had chosen must obey, though the condition of the unenlightened was infinitely pitiable, and the doom of those who would not see nor harken a thought at which to shudder—behind the message of the Scriptures that seemed so plain, there remained, ever and always, the element of the incalculable. For human arguments failed when the strength of Love was not admitted. Behind them, above them all, remained the one Light for the many mysteries that may not really be made clear while human life

* "Lettres," vol. ii. No. 572.

continues; the Light towards which, even in her blindness and her harshness, Angélique groped continually; the Light that was always dimly present in her own clouded reflections, and received such expression as human speech allowed in the oft-repeated watchword of Saint-Cyran: "God only."

CHAPTER IX

"LE BÛT DE L'ABBÉ DE SAINT-CYRAN"

THOSE great issues of eternity which so constantly occupied the minds of Angélique and her circle of associates, within and without the convent walls, reduced, by force of contrast, the momentousness of any threat or possibility of danger from a human source. But it was impossible to be indifferent to the persecution that overtook Port-Royal. Some of the sufferers gloried in it, others recognized in it a necessary discipline, but all, whatever their degree of spiritual attainment, were forced to acknowledge that the visible influence and position of the community was trending to complete and inevitable extinction beneath the pressure of an outward force.

Some of the causes of the persecution are self-evident, but one among the many has been given undue prominence, so that some writers appear to believe the suppression of a community of nuns to be traceable to Jesuit antagonism towards a new system of education for boys. This view is erroneous; yet it is undeniable that the strongest influence against Port-Royal was Jesuit influence. Saint-Cyran had been too strong an individuality to be left in freedom by Richelieu, and Richelieu imprisoned him, but Saint-Cyran and Richelieu were both dead years before the worst period of persecution. And, although Angélique to a curious degree sustained the personal influence of Saint-Cyran, and stimulated others to do the like, it did not demand abnormal insight to foresee that with her death that influence would cease to spread, and that so long as she lived it would be impossible by any external measures to extinguish her impressiveness in the eyes of her

generation. It was not really to Saint-Cyran, or to Saint-Cyran's doctrine, that the persecution was actually directed; it was not a method of repudiating any particular doctrine or any particular course of conduct; it was not one of the persecutions that spring from rage at an accomplished fact; but it was born of apprehension of an infinitude of possibilities.

And Port-Royal won notoriety—and with notoriety a form of influence that nothing could obliterate—by the fact of persecution. Just as Saint-Cyran attained a hold, by his imprisonment, on the hearts of his contemporaries to which he had never even aspired while he remained at liberty, so Port-Royal was uplifted to an importance immeasurably greater than anything which its friends would have foretold or coveted for it, by the method designed for its extinction. The heresy involved, even if admitted to be heresy, was a very small matter; the silent, studious hermits and the faithful nuns of Port-Royal might have been allowed, even as a matter of policy, some indulgence on an unessential point, and so the Church would have been spared a controversy almost illimitable in its scope and interminable in its duration. That view of the matter appears an obvious one; and if we continue the same parallel we may see that as Richelieu's imprisonment of Saint-Cyran was proved to be an error in judgment, so the attack of the Jesuits upon Port-Royal implies a failure of the notable astuteness of the great company. That conclusion is not, however, altogether satisfactory. History seldom points to such failures, nor is it probable that the Jesuits would have been actuated in a measure so profound and so deliberate as the challenge to Port-Royal, by a motive of malice or of any other petty sentiment. We are more likely to approach the truth if we acknowledge that the Jesuits never gave stronger proof of their far-seeing wisdom than in declaring a war for which their adversaries were peculiarly well equipped, and in which their own cause was so hard to justify.

A brief review of the position may serve to emphasize this contention. In 1643, the year in which definite hostilities against Port-Royal as distinguished from Saint-Cyran began, Port-Royal

itself had existed for the world for a period of only thirty years. Before that it was but a small and obscure convent, with nothing worthy either of praise or blame to differentiate it from a hundred others. Angélique Arnauld, fulfilling the purposes of God, had nourished and trained it in its rapid growth, while it struck its roots deep into the national life, and spread far more in shadow and unseen than in the full glare of general observation. Nominally, in 1643, it was merely a community of cloistered nuns, to whom a small group of pious students had in some degree linked themselves that they might live in the poverty and seclusion that the rule of the religious would have prescribed; but already, to the eyes of the discriminating, the real place of Port-Royal was evident. It was the greatest religious birth of the French Church,* it was a temple whose foundations were laid in solid rock, a thing to be regarded with overwhelming awe, whose very strength, as yet unproved in magnitude, justified apprehension. And it was the Jesuits who realized where others were only awakening to notice and to wonder. To say, as it is sometimes said, that their wrath was roused against Port-Royal, because its hermits pursued a system of education that bade fair to rival theirs, may be a statement that contains an element of truth, but it is but a cheap and limited explanation of a wide-reaching and carefully concerted movement. The rivalry in education existed undoubtedly, as did also the antagonism between Saint-Cyran's doctrine of penitence and that adhered to by the Order whose strength has always lain in large measure in their capacity for direction. But neither one nor the other of these points is in any way representative. The root of Port-Royal, its worth to those who sympathized with it, its danger to those who differed, went far deeper. The disciples of Ignatius Loyola are nourished by strong conviction; their faith in their Order is not a mere sentiment to be brushed aside by innovation and its supporting arguments. They pay tribute in discipline and self-renunciation to a great tradition; it is theirs to rest upon, and they are of necessity the enemies of all that clashes with it. Theirs, they believed, was the truth the world

* See Dean Church, "Pascal and other Sermons."

was needing. Human nature, as they saw it, offered them barren soil, but they, an ever-growing Company, promised to be ageless and immortal, and though the sowing of the seed was a laborious task the harvest must inevitably come if they could guard the fields from marauding trespassers. At Port-Royal the barrenness of the same soil was also recognized, but at Port-Royal the great crop of noxious weeds seemed more evident than the stony places, and the weeds were attributed to those who professed to be preparing it for harvest. The existence of the weeds was undeniable, but the Jesuits advocated the postponement of their destruction till the crop be further advanced. Port-Royal denied the possibility of true growth while the weeds were suffered to exist. Thus the two views were diametrically opposed, and the opposition was only the more vehement because of the identity in ultimate aim.

Saint-Cyran and Jansenius in their discontent with existing conditions, with the evident and rapid growth of the weeds, sought from S. Augustine a remedy that they might offer to their fellow-sufferers. The fruit of their joint studies was the "Augustinus" of Jansenius, a book which was in fact an arrangement of selections from the voluminous writings of S. Augustine, and not an original work of theology.* It contained the doctrine of grace that inspired Port-Royal, "that inward grace of Jesus Christ that wins the heart and breaks its hardness, which snaps its chains, masters its passions, heals its sores, and finally causes it to do good and desire it, according to God's good pleasure." †

This idea of grace as a magical power, victorious over evil, an ever-present miracle, was inseparable from the faith and practice of Angélique Arnauld, and it should be remembered that it was so, long before her life touched Saint-Cyran's. From all the ramifications of the theory, from all the host of difficulties suggested by the terms of predestination and of election, it is best to hold aloof. Angélique herself was not concerned with them, her conviction was very definite and clearly marked, and neither Jansenius nor Saint-Cyran could do more than express in

* See Sainte-Beuve, "Port-Royal," vol. ii. p. 99.

† M. F. Mathieu, "Abregé du Doctrine de S. Augustine" (1605).

a more concrete form the truth she had long since made her own, and imparted to her sisters. But it was otherwise with what may be termed the practical offshoots of the theory: Saint-Cyran's teaching regarding the sacraments of Penance and of the Eucharist. These touched on points towards which no thinking man or woman could be indifferent, and left very little opening for misinterpretation. The Jesuits were in utter disagreement with the reformers, and they saw that suggestions of these poisonous novelties were certain to be propagated, not only in the widening circle of the friends of Port-Royal in the present, but in the future by the generation of clever children, who were being trained by the studious hermits, the faithful disciples of Saint-Cyran. Thus it was that the fiat went forth that Port-Royal must yield, or—what was practically the same thing—cease to exist, and neither the release nor the death of Saint-Cyran (arch culprit though he was) affected the stern resolve. It was an evil that the efficacy of Absolution should be questioned. It was an evil that the masses of the so-called faithful should be deterred from coming to the Altar. Both were evils that weakened the position of the priesthood, but both were evils that might be gradually eliminated by strong counter influence, and the children of Ignatius Loyola are infinitely patient. It was the element of the unknown that their wisdom detected and taught them to fear supremely in Port-Royal. And we, looking back across the intervening centuries, can realize and applaud their foresight and discrimination.

If we consider the group that dwelt at Port-Royal, and realize them as men of powerful intellect, undistracted from deep study and reflection on the deepest questions by the claims of ambition or of self-indulgence; if we take into our calculations their background in the still, firm practice of the religious life as Angélique Arnauld had taught it to her sisters, we must acknowledge that it was no idle fancy that discerned in them incalculable possibilities of influence. Moreover, a sinister fate ordained that their prophet should be a man bold enough to embody his opinions in so clear a statement as the "Théologie Familière" of Saint-Cyran. And there was no help for them in the sound learning of Jansenius,

for he had contrived to render S. Augustine so obscurely as to make himself responsible for suggestions that were actually drawn directly from the writings of the Saint.

Such were the real and reasonable causes that brought the Jesuits into conflict with Port-Royal—causes that are now evident, but which at the moment were unfathomable for the ordinary onlooker, and unprobed by those who were forced into fighting for existence. Having glanced briefly at them, it is necessary to trace the actual course of the struggle, as far as it is possible to do so, without regarding the innumerable and complicated side issues involved. It raged chiefly round the "Augustinus" of Jansenius. Port-Royal had become so welded with the teaching of Saint-Cyran that, in the general opinion, no severance was possible. But Saint-Cyran had shared the studies of Jansenius, and was partly responsible for their great result. Therefore, it was evident that to convict Jansenius of heresy was tantamount to the conviction of Port-Royal. This much desired end was attained with a speed that is somewhat astonishing. Jansenius had, it is true, adhered so closely to S. Augustine that a censure on his whole book might have suggested untoward counter accusations against his critics, but an ingenious brain * conceived the idea of extracting from the whole work certain propositions, five in number, which might be submitted to the Censors, and these five propositions were condemned as heresy by a Bull promulgated by Innocent X. in 1653.

The testimony of disapproval levelled by the Vatican against a deceased Dutch theologian seems very far away from the nuns of Port-Royal in the quiet daily practice of their Rule. Yet no national event, nor individual family misfortune, could have had more intimate effect upon the destiny of each. There is a peculiar element of irony in all the conditions of the persecution.† For,

* That of Cornet, Syndic of the Sorbonne.

† Cf. Voltaire, "Siècle de Louis XIV.," ch. 208: "Il serait très utile à ceux qui sont entétés de toutes ces disputes, de jetter les yeux sur l'histoire générale du Monde; car en observant tant de Nations, tant de mœurs, tant de Religions différentes, on voit le peu de figure que font sur la Terre un Moliniste et un Janseniste."

in fact, it is not likely that any one of the nuns of Port-Royal cared in the least degree for the subtle questions of theology on which that erudite scholar, the Bishop of Ypres, had spent himself unstintedly. But, while he went to his grave in peace, they suffered, and—it is a crowning paradox—suffered for the most part gladly, rejoicingly, as those suffer who may esteem themselves as Martyrs for a cause that is dear to them as their life-blood. They were not asked to profess or to deny any article of faith, no opening was given for defence or argument, they were merely required to sign a paper stating that they believed the Five Propositions condemned by the Pope as heresy were in the "Augustinus." But because Saint-Cyran had set the seal of his approval on the "Augustinus" (and they themselves, it should be remembered, had no opportunity of reading it), the nuns of Port-Royal absolutely refused to acknowledge that it could, by any possibility, be heretical.

The declaration in its final form terminated thus: "I condemn in my heart, and by my words, the doctrine of the Five Propositions of Cornelius Jansenius, contained in the book called the 'Augustinus,' which has been condemned by these two Popes,* which doctrine is not that of S. Augustine, but wrongly explained by Jansenius contrary to the meaning of the Saint."†

It is difficult to understand how the most ardent supporter of Ecclesiastical Authority could coerce either his conscience or his reason into sympathy with this outrageous exaction. It was said that it was a mere question of terms, that the real demand was for a general expression of submission, and that the ignorance of the nuns on the points of theology involved, absolved them from all responsibility in the matter. There were, indeed, some reasonable arguments to support that view. La Mère Angélique, when she emancipated the community from the direction of the Monks of Citeaux, had accepted that of the Archbishop of Paris, and the

* Innocent X. and Alexander VII.

† Ordinance of the Vicars-General and of Cardinal de Retz, Archbishop of Paris, 1661.

religious may not easily elude the claim of the vow of obedience. Pressing though it may be, however, it is not absolutely peremptory. "Many people fall into grave error on this question of obedience," said that most wise director, François de Sales, "by believing that obedience consists in doing just as we are bidden at random, without any reference to the commandments of God and of Holy Church. This is a very great mistake, and suggests blind folly that has no foundation. For as those in authority have no authority to give commands that are against those of God, so those under them are under no obligation to obey in such a case, and if they do obey will sin." *

Thus, while de Perefixe (and his successors in the See of Paris) was completely within his rights when he asked of the nuns of Port-Royal (and of the rest of his flock) a formal profession of submission to his authority, and of confidence in his judgment, he did exceed his prerogative when he required of them a statement the substance of which they sincerely believed to be untrue. This was a stumbling-block foreseen by the Jesuits, and it was, as the Jesuits intended, the cause of the destruction of Port-Royal. But it was also its glory. The stumbling-block might, perhaps, have been avoided; a little moderation in thought, a little prudence in action, might have postponed the evil hour, and amid the changes and chances of human life postponement might have meant escape. But Port-Royal was not distinguished by moderation or by prudence, for it was a characteristic of those troublous times that these virtues might hardly co-exist with that which was the chief treasure of Port-Royal, the virtue of sincerity. Saint-Cyran had not taught his daughters even the rudiments of sophistry. To them the Declaration was a lie pure and simple, and though they saw with agony what refusal must involve, it seemed to them, when in its ultimate form it was laid before them, that they had no choice but to refuse their signatures.

"I have reflected for a long time past on this dispute regarding Jansenius," wrote the great thinker, Nicole, many years later; "it never wearies me. The pettiness of the subject and the

* S. François de Sales, "Entretiens," xi.

immense variety of incident form a result so bizarre that it supplies the imagination with a wonder that is constantly renewed. It is all marvellous in all directions, but that which to me seems most astonishing is the share in it that was forced upon these nuns, whose sex and calling had so little connection with the matter in dispute.

What is there that the nuns of Port-Royal have not suffered rather than give the signature required of them? Either in their own monastery, or in other monasteries, they have endured so terrible a captivity that it would be hard to find anything to equal the hardness of their lot. They saw their community broken up and destroyed before their eyes, and their House in Paris in the hands of a few of their Sisters, whose principle aim was to ruin them that their own domination might be more secure.*

The proceedings against the nuns were not hurried, however, and the date of their first defiance was not immediately succeeded by their final ruin. The first move against them was tentative, and made good show of reason. Because they were under suspicion of heresy, they must not have young minds committed to their charge lest these also should be imbued with error. Accordingly the children, whose training and education was one of their chief exterior occupations, were scattered to their respective homes, and it was decreed that Port-Royal should receive no novices. This was a serious measure, and in addition to its actual inconvenience it implied disgrace, making it plain that thenceforward those who valued their prospects of advancement in the Church or State must not be backward in casting a stone at Port-Royal. "Un petit grain d'anti Jansenisme remedie à toute sorte de défauts," † said Nicole, bitterly.

There were periods when the clouds lifted; moments when the sanguine cherished a hope that the sun would once more shine in its fulness on them; but in retrospect the interludes have small significance, being rather suggestive of those pauses ordained of old by the Spanish inquisitor that his victim might gather

* Nicole, "Les Imaginaires et les Visionaires," lett. vi.

† Ibid., lett. i.

strength to endure new torture. As a matter of dates, the future still held some years of tranquillity for them when they entered on their first period of persecution, and Angélique herself did not live to see the climax of their sufferings. But to her, as to all who were near the inner life of Port-Royal, it must have been obvious that, though the persecution might be intermittent, its only true end would be the complete extinction of its victims.

The variations and vicissitudes of the fortunes of Port-Royal need not be traced in detail. The first real call for the display of resolution came to the nuns in 1653, when the Civil War was over, and Innocent X. had issued his Bull against Jansenius. In 1657 they were once more allowed to receive pupils and postulants; four years ensued of outward calm and continual danger, and then the tempest broke over them again. In the summer of that year, in 1661, Angélique died.

That, in brief, is the outline of her last experience of trial. In considering her attitude towards it, we come once more into touch with the spiritual depths of that strong nature which had already borne her through so many diversities of suffering. But the overwhelming difficulty that darkened her closing days was not directly traceable to any venture of her own. She had always been ready to dare danger, had sometimes shown herself rash in enterprise, and had always met consequences gallantly. It was only at the end that the chain of cause and effect in her life-story was interrupted, and her misfortunes came as the result of the courses chosen by others. For, as we have said, the real strength of Port-Royal, apart from Angélique herself, must be sought in the dwellings of the hermits outside the convent walls. There lay the unknown force which might at any moment become irrepressible, and which did affect the thought of France to a degree which even the Jesuits had not foreseen. Jansenism was but a term; S. Augustine had very distant relation to the point at issue; the actual danger was that these headstrong thinkers, searching for truth in their seclusion, would tear down, not only the disfiguring scaffolding, but the actual pillars that

supported the edifice of faith, and that in the resulting ruin the ignorant masses would be overwhelmed.

The literary side of Port-Royal has thus very close relation to the life of la Mère Angélique (though she herself left no writings on spiritual subjects). So close are the links that, after her reform of Port-Royal and Maubuisson was accomplished, the chief events in the history of the community are marked by the publication of the books that made Port-Royal famous. As a beginning we have the humble pamphlet of la Mère Agnès, which was the first bond between Saint-Cyran and Port-Royal; this was followed by the "Théologie Familière" of Saint-Cyran himself, a production that was a great cause of offence to those who did not agree with him, and embodies the real boldness of the writer and his honest indifference to consequences more clearly than the celebrated Spiritual letters which were addressed to private persons. His definition of the Church in his Théologie, for instance, might, it was said, have been given by Luther or Calvin. He described it as including all those "who served God in light, in the profession of the true faith, and in the unity of charity." * Obviously it would have been the path of prudence to explain the essentials of the true faith that no misconception should arise, but Saint-Cyran had that type of intellectual self-confidence which refuses to provide against the mistakes of others. His words in their true meaning were blameless, and once written he would neither soften nor retract them. But the points on which he wrote habitually were those which require the most careful handling, and a word changing the sense a hair's breadth might carry the whole across the borderland of heresy. The two Sacraments, that of the Holy Eucharist and that of Penance, on which the dogma of the Roman Church is most authoritative, occupied his thoughts continually, and it is impossible not to recognize that his writings were calculated to induce in the minds of the faithful a dangerous confusion betwixt the subjective and objective views.

The recognized practice which he had inculcated at Port-

* "Théologie Familière," p. 35.

Royal, that of delaying absolution till the contrition of the penitent had been tested, was in itself a challenge of the subjective efficacy of absolution, and his oft-repeated warnings against the reception of the Blessed Sacrament with insufficient preparation were distorted in the same direction. If not deliberately heretical, they were unquestionably dangerous, and the "Théologie Familière" was finally condemned by de Gondi, Archbishop of Paris, in a Mandate of 1643. The condemnation affected the popular opinion of Port-Royal more than it could affect Saint-Cyran, who was then near his death-bed, but before it was pronounced attention had been distracted from the Théologie by the appearance * of a far more sensational piece of work, the celebrated "Livre de la Fréquente Communion" of Antoine Arnauld. Some of the elements of the thought and opinion of Port-Royal are preserved in that book as they have been in no other. Although not written by Saint-Cyran, it has been generally regarded as containing the essence of his doctrine, and it is instinct with the spirit of austerity † which confronts us in all records of the great director's personal dealing. It is fitting, therefore, that it should have aroused the storm that eventually engulfed those who professed the stern opinions that it embodied, and a cursory glance at the book itself provides a not inadequate explanation of the immense effect that it produced.

Hitherto Saint-Cyran's doctrine had been a question for theologians, his method of direction the concern only of those who had submitted to it and of such as discharged a like office themselves. His imprisonment had made him better known to society, because the attention of Richelieu inevitably involved for its recipient the attention of the many who spent their lives watching for indications of the great man's will; but the tremendous national events that came to pass in the year of his release and death might well have overwhelmed all

* August, 1643.

† Fontaine thus describes the impression it made upon society: "On reconnut que la pénitence n'étoit point un jeu, comme on sembloit le croire par la maniere dont on la faisoit" ("Mem.," vol. i. p. 377).

remembrance of him. In 1643, however, the time was already ripe for a manifesto of the deliberate convictions of the Port-Royalists, and it was supplied in the "Livre de la Fréquente Communion."

The actual occasion of the work is oddly characteristic of the period—a period when an incident of infinitesimal importance often led to results of incalculable weight. Those two celebrated ladies—Mme. de Guemenée and Mme. de Sablé—disagreed on a question of conscience. They both belonged to that type of personality that desires to proclaim its private sensations and emotions (whether amorous or spiritual) from the house-top, and all their world was taken into their confidence. The question was this: Mme. de Sablé urged Mme. de Guemenée to go to a ball, and Mme. de Guemenée refused because she had that morning received the Holy Sacrament. Mme. de Sablé, who was at that time under the direction of the Jesuit de Sesmaisons, contended that this was no hindrance. Mme. de Guemenée, in obedience to Saint-Cyran's precept, stood firm.* De Sesmaisons wrote a pamphlet on the subject. Saint-Cyran was prevented by his imprisonment from replying, and M. Singlin, his successor and his most worthy representative, was quite incompetent to enter on a literary conflict with the keenest intellects in Europe. And thereupon Antoine Arnauld took up his pen.

It was only after the arrest of Saint-Cyran that Antoine, the youngest of the great family of Arnauld, became definitely associated with Port-Royal. He was a Doctor of the College of the Sorbonne, a student as eager as Saint-Cyran or Jansenius, and a priest whose private life satisfied his kindred as to the reality of his vocation. He was twenty years younger than la Mère Angélique, and we find her warning him against being

* Voltaire (always antagonistic to Port-Royal) refers to the Jansenist disapproval of dancing as follows: "Les Jansénistes, que les Cardinaux de Richelieu et de Mazarin voulurent réprimer, s én vengèrent contre les plaisirs que les deux Ministres procuraient à la Nation. Les mêmes esprits que bouleverseraient un Etat pour établir une opinion souvent absurde, anathématisent les plaisirs innocens nécessaires à une grande ville" ("Siècle de Louis XIV.," ch. 197).

betrayed into intellectual vanity with motherly solicitude.* He is connected with one of the most pathetic of the strangely impressive pictures which here and there claim our attention unexpectedly among the records of Port-Royal. When la Sœur Catherine de S. Félicité was dying—she who had once been Mme. Arnauld—she sent a message to the youngest of her children, and for a moment the old maternal instinct of authority flashed into being as she called on him to dedicate the splendid powers that she knew him to possess to the service of God in proclaiming the truth fearlessly to the ears of all men. Already he had given his allegiance to the prisoner at Vincennes, and Saint-Cyran had received him in a spirit of humility that recognized the seriousness of the charge. Already probably Arnauld had seen that in casting in his lot with the friend of Jansenius he was destroying his hopes of recognition as an authority in the world of thinkers, or (which he heeded less) of advancement in the Church.† But that to which he was summoned by the dying lips of his mother was a task of far graver import; it meant that he must not be content to be associated with the responsibility of others, and merely give them the support of passive agreement, but that he must himself take the initiative and brave the consequences that his own action would inevitably bring upon himself. Because such a course was likely to arouse indignation rather than contempt, and would carry with it the excitement inseparable from any undertaking which the world watches, it was not as hard a choice as was made by Angélique when she closed the convent door against her father, or by Le Maistre when he passed into despised obscurity; nevertheless, to make and maintain his choice required qualities of courage and resolution that proved Antoine Arnauld to be a worthy representative of his race, and secured for him the ardent sympathy and admiration of all who loved Port-Royal.

* "Lettres," vol. i. No. 146.

† Voltaire will not allow that he was disinterested in his defiance. See "Siècle de Louis XIV.," ch. 208: "Son génie, et les circonstances où il se trouva le déterminèrent à la guerre de plume et à se faire chef de parti, espèce d'ambition devant qui toutes les autres disparaissent."

The interest of his book has passed away with the crisis that gave it birth. In the twentieth century it finds no readers, for its severe and solid reasoning is not adorned by any of the grace of style that claims sympathy across any gulf of centuries or traditions. It is the book of a man who has a message to deliver, and will not leave any opening for his hearers to misconceive its import, and therefore it is overloaded with definitions and explanations. But when it appeared, the insistent warning whispers of the Jesuits had prepared men's minds for its reception, and it produced an effect far greater than had been expected by the writer or his supporters.

Its title-page gives a sufficiently comprehensive indication of its contents. It ran thus—

"DE LA FREQUENTE COMMUNION

ou Les Sentimens des Pères, des Papes and des Conciles touchant l'usage des Sacrémens de Pénitence et d'Eucharistе, sont fidellement exposéz. Pour servir d'adresse aux personnes qui pensent serieusement à se convertir à Dieu; et aux Pasteurs et Confesseurs zélez pour le bien des âmes,

par M. Antoine Arnauld Prêtre.

(*Docteur en Théologie de la Maison de Sorbonne.*)"

To an intelligent reader with only a very slight knowledge of the controversies rife at the moment, that opening would serve as preparation for the substance of the rest. It was, in fact, from beginning to end a scarcely veiled protest against the tolerance of the Jesuits towards the vices that ruined every grade of society in body and soul, and an open and vehement declaration of the tremendous import of the two Sacraments as a means of salvation to the penitent and faithful, but of destruction to the careless. The motto of the book, "Sancta Sanctis," was aptly chosen.

It cannot be doubted that Arnauld when he wrote his book knew what a powerful weapon he was placing in the hands of his enemies. It was the same weapon that had been levelled

at his sister, la Mère Agnès, when her "Chapelet Secret" was a cause of controversy; it was continually flourished against Saint-Cyran; and it was impossible that the new champion of their belief should escape. The root of the dissension is not far to seek.

These Sacraments, said the Jesuits, are divinely instituted means of grace; the more widely they are distributed the more will grace abound.

To which Port-Royal had made answer: These Sacraments are the sacred charge of the priesthood to be guarded from the unworthy; they are the emblems of the gift of Grace, but they are spiritual, not magical. Woe to him who gives or receives them lightly.

Both views were true, yet each was so maintained that the two became impossible to reconcile, although each could count among its supporters men of the deepest piety, to whom truth was far more precious than life itself. Strange problems are often presented to the student of human nature by the conflicts of sincere and earnest thinkers; the whole course of the protracted struggle against Jansenism is especially prolific of such conflicts, and to some on either side it seemed that the principle involved in the subjects of dispute was of the deepest and most vital importance to the welfare of the Christian world.

For instance, at the very outset, we find Vincent de Paul ranged against Antoine Arnauld, and urging on his readers that this new teaching tended to alienate man from God by raising so impenetrable a barrier of awe and dread that few would dare to pass it. "Is it not evident," he wrote, with a suggestion of scorn a little at variance with his habitual charity, "that the spiritual dispositions demanded by this young doctor for the fit reception of the holy mysteries are so exalted, so out of reach of human weakness, that no living being could feel assured of them? If—as he maintains unshrinkingly—communion is only permitted to those who are wholly perfect, and wholly without reproach, how may we escape from judging—as he does—that those who communicate in obedience to the practice of the Church with

ordinary dispositions, are dogs and infidels? . . . Verily, by these standards only the author himself is worthy of communion. He lifts his requirements so high that a S. Paul would tremble at them; nevertheless, in his explanation, he does not scruple to boast many times that he says mass daily." *

That protest from a man of really holy life suggests the impression made by the book on many minds that were not directly under Jesuit influence. It was said that at Easter that year there were 3000 fewer communicants in the great Church of Saint-Sulpice,† and the young champion of Saint-Cyran's doctrine was held responsible. The probable exaggeration of figures in one instance, and misrepresentation in argument and deduction in the other, does not eliminate the essential truth in the point of view that prompted the exaggeration. The danger that the simple-minded S. Vincent and the experienced Jesuit fathers denounced was an undeniable danger, but it arose from the misinterpretation and distortion of Saint-Cyran's doctrine. In this lay the injustice to which Port-Royal was subjected. In the case of the "Augustinus," and in many succeeding instances, they were persecuted because the malice or the ignorance of others tortured their words into a sense which was alien to its real intention. Père Rapin, the celebrated Jesuit historian, gives us the war-cry of his party, when he comments on Saint-Cyran's conduct with regard to "Le Chapelet Secret" of la Mère Agnès. "Le bût de l'Abbé de Saint-Cyran," says he, "etait d'eloigner les hommes de la fréquentation de ce sacrément par les idées si rédoutables qu'il en donnait." ‡

But against him, against all the specious arguments of those to whom Port-Royal in its purity and strength was so disquieting as to be intolerable, against the difficulties which its doctrine may still suggest, we may set the words of Saint-Cyran himself, the summary of his deep conviction on the very point where he has been most questioned—

* See Rohrbacher, "Hist. de l'Eglise," xxv. 455.
† Mgr. Ricard, "Le Premières Jansenists," p. 94.
‡ Rapin, "Hist. du Jansenisme," p. 273.

"It should not be imagined that to go to the Holy Communion we must needs be perfect, but that we have the desire to be so, and that we labour with that intent. Do not let your humility deprive you of the greatest blessing in the world on the plea that you are unfit. Interpose true repentance betwixt your unfitness and Holy Communion, and you need not long abstain. For if you neglect penance and Holy Communion, and make this your custom, be assured that your loss in these two directions will be a far greater evil than those sins which your false humility has made the cause of your neglect." *

Truly "le bût de l'Abbé de Saint-Cyran," on account of which the nuns of Port-Royal suffered, was strangely twisted by the fingers of his adversaries till he himself would not have recognized it. Yet because the twisting failed to destroy, the essential truth of the man and of his doctrine were proved as they could never have been proved had the world received him with acclamation, and showered favour on his followers. For all that man can do was done against Port-Royal, and in the eyes of men its enemies triumphed with a completeness such as is seldom permitted to human enterprise. Nevertheless, the high hopes of the most sanguine among the hermits could hardly have pictured Port-Royal as a stronger or more enduring influence than it became in ruin and disgrace.

Antoine Arnauld should be recognized as the defender of the practices of Saint-Cyran rather than of the doctrine of Jansenius. He based all his teaching on S. Augustine, it is true, but he always maintained that he had done so before the work of the great Dutch scholar fell into his hands.† The distinction is not immaterial, for Arnauld personally was especially an object of persecution in spite of his independence of the nominal cause of dispute and censure. Indeed, Port-Royal suffered as much for Arnauld as for Saint-Cyran. The memory of the latter was the source of inspiration in the persecuted, the existence of the former a perpetual cause of irritation to their enemies. It was not

* Besoigne, "Hist. de Port-Royal," part ii. liv. 2.

† Pasquier Quesnel, "Hist. d'A. Arnauld," p. 27 (1697).

possible to find heresy in "La Livre de la Fréquente Communion," but it had made its author a centre of attention, and his manner of comporting himself developed suspicion into fierce antagonism. In truth, though we admit the sterling strength and courage of Antoine Arnauld, there is no charm in the impression of his personality, and it is likely that Port-Royal suffered from his violence and want of tact far more than it gained from his intellectual powers and his ardour in its defence. He seems to have aroused a personal animosity of a far more dangerous kind than was ever directed against any other of the Jansenist writers. Certain facts regarding his life indicate that at heart he was humble, but it is difficult to reconcile the ordinary conception of humility with the combative attitude that he maintained towards a world that dared to criticize and question him, and the conditions of the cause that he defended made that attitude essentially impolitic. When Saint-Cyran died he became the titular leader of the party, but, in the trenchant words of Sainte Beuve, "général qui n'est, à vrai dire, que le plus bouillant soldat." *

We have seen that even the pen of S. Vincent was dipped in gall when Arnauld was the theme of his reflections; we cannot wonder, therefore, that men to whom acrimonious phrases came so readily as they did to many of the Jesuit pamphleteers, should have surpassed themselves in venomous innuendo in their attacks upon a society that acknowledged him as champion. "In spite of the meanest and commonest appearance," says Rapin, "he was perhaps the most extraordinary man that ever existed, for he hid beneath an air of infantile simplicity all the wiles and cunning of age and experience." The description accounts for the irritation that he caused, and we are continually reminded that irritation was justified. Yet at all times Arnauld was as sincere as Angélique herself, only he was honestly incapable of recognizing in himself those dispositions which were most patent in him to other people.

Just such another petty incident as had brought the great "Livre de la Fréquente Communion" into being was the cause of

* "Port-Royal," vol. iii. p. 23.

still more celebrated writings, and of proportionately increased ferocity in opposition. The "Augustinus" had appeared meanwhile, the Five Propositions had been extracted and censured, and the first agreement with the censure had been presented and signed by many, with the mental reservation that the book did not contain the Propositions. Suspicion was turned towards Port-Royal, but it had not yet taken definite form, and men well known for their courage and their wit and their influence, still slipped away from the ranks of the worldly to join the hermits and defy Court favour. Notable among them was M. le Duc de Liancourt, rich and popular and gifted. His wife still lived when his "call" first came, and they agreed to build a château and settle within reach of Port-Royal des Champs. She died ere long, and de Liancourt did not maintain a rule of self-devotion, but he never broke alliance with Port-Royal even when he permitted himself some of the world's attractions, and he placed his grand-daughters under the care of la Mère Angélique.

The ducal residence was in the parish of Saint-Sulpice, and M. le Duc went thither in January, 1655, to make his confession before M. Picoté, a priest of no particular note. It was little more than a year since Pope Innocent X. had issued his Bull against the Five Propositions, and the murmurs that confused Jansenius and Port-Royal and heresy in a web of words, were growing more insistent month by month. M. le Duc, however, had gone, according to custom, to his parish church without any special self-examination on abstruse questions of theology, and M. Picoté is wholly responsible for the notoriety that fell to them both. He chose (making a curious perversion of Saint-Cyran's system) to refuse absolution to M. le Duc, on the plea that he had not confessed his connection with Port-Royal, nor shown inclination to put away the sin which he could not deny. M. le Duc seems to have gone homewards calmly, and to have made his experience known without the slightest display of indignation. It was evident, however, that M. Picoté had acted under orders, probably those of M. Olier (whose character and reputation ranked with that of Vincent de Paul), and that the representatives

of Saint-Sulpice were throwing down the gauntlet. Arnauld, though he professed a love of peace, was not tardy in seizing on it. His "Lettre à une Personne de Condition" was written, printed, and widely read. Its importance in the eyes of the opposite party was proved by the number of replies, and these in their turn provoked another letter from him, addressed "à un Duc et Pair."* This last was in itself a volume of compressed theology. The injustice to M. de Liancourt, the hardihood of M. Picoté, fade into the background; it was rather the defence of the truth—the dying charge of his mother—that inspired the pen of Antoine Arnauld; prudence and moderation are flung to the winds, and he hurls himself against his adversaries as though courting the disaster that awaited him.

Considering the extraordinary complications in points of theology in connection with the "Augustinus" that were already unfolding themselves, it would assuredly have been the path of wisdom for one who was regarded as the champion of his party, on whose utterances the fortunes of hundreds of innocent persons did actually depend, to avoid subtleties that were open to dual interpretation, and to steer clear as far as might be from questions on which it is impossible to dogmatize. "They talk unceasingly of the meaning of Jansenius," cried Nicole, despairingly, "but what is the meaning of Jansenius? It is a mystery that one is forbidden to fathom."† It was, then, the part of a wise man not to meddle with the investigation at that particular moment —when careful generalship might have postponed, if it could not avert, a catastrophe. But, after all, Antoine Arnauld would have been less truly one with Port-Royal had he weighed his words and moved with circumspection, for courage rather than caution dictated the course whereby Port-Royal came to greatness, and it is not unfitting that the same quality brought it to its fall.

That disputed question of Grace, the question wherein "the meaning of Jansenius" was so hard to determine, which was so

* For detailed history of this incident, see Père Rapin's "Memoires," vol. iii.

† "Les Imaginaires et les Visionaires," lett. i.

inextricably confused with the dread Five Propositions, and is—in sober truth—so unfruitful a topic whereon to dogmatize, was in no wise to be avoided by those who read the Letter to a Duke and Peer. Just the point that was specially irritating to his opponents was that on which Antoine Arnauld elected to enlarge. He chose to cite the fall of S. Peter as an example of the withdrawal of grace, and the necessary consequence thereof. A similar citation is made by S. Augustine and by S. John Chrysostom,* but it was one which gave peculiar umbrage to the Jesuits, who had already contrived to twist it into heresy, and Arnauld's reference to it in the present instance was gratuitous. This book was, in fact, a defence of Jansenius, as that on Frequent Communion had been a defence of Saint-Cyran, and Jansenius' doctrine of Grace was felt very justly to contain the same elements of danger to the thousands who were incapable of weighing or fully comprehending it for themselves, as had been attributed to Saint-Cyran's doctrine touching the two Sacraments. Both were a danger to the Church, and those who dared to support or to defend them deserved to suffer.

Antoine Arnauld was a flagrant offender, and retribution was not long delayed. The learned Doctors of the Sorbonne assembled together, held conclave week after week on the work of their colleague, and finally pronounced their censure. Arnauld waited in the seclusion of Port-Royal des Champs, the Court and the city watched and criticized and gossiped, and the interest was as great as that which—in the lawless days before Louis XIV. had shown himself a King—was wont to centre on a fashionable duel. But the result seemed a foregone conclusion. Arnauld was gallant, he was also stubborn, but no amount of pluck and resolution could withstand the overwhelming force that had mustered against him. Disgrace and exile were his appointed portion, and in due course his disgrace would gradually overshadow and engulf his friends till Port-Royal, with its reforms and innovations and resulting controversies, had become a thing of the past, and the world was the poorer for an element of

* See Pasquier Quesnel, "Hist. d'A. Arnauld," p. 80.

interest and occasional excitement. Such, one may imagine, was the general view of the situation among the mass of onlookers for whom questions of theology were of no importance, and who could watch unconcernedly a struggle for life such as lay before the nuns and hermits of Port-Royal.

And in part the view of the onlooker was justified. Disgrace awaited Arnauld, and his ruin eventually involved all those whom he represented. But the touch of the unexpected, so frequent in this history, prevented the complete fulfilment of the prophecy. Even to the thoughtless, to those who marvel at the folly that can risk liberty and reputation on such dry bones as a question of abstract theology, Port-Royal was not destined to become a thing of the past. Antoine Arnauld, it is true, was condemned by the theologians of Paris and of Rome, and could no longer be a source of imminent danger to the faithful, or a bulwark of defence to his misguided party, but in that same month of his condemnation, January, 1656—a few days, indeed, before his fate was sealed—there appeared in Paris a modest leaflet, having within it that inexplicable element of magic which seizes on and masters the minds of men whether they will or no. All those who read—and they were many—wondered and smiled, and read again. They forgot the interminable dulness of Arnauld's disquisitions; they forgot the clever and admired jugglery displayed by his enemies which had almost vanquished a natural desire to see fair play and applaud the weaker side; they forgot private interest and preconceived opinion in the first delight of a new experience, for, until then, Frenchmen had had little opportunity of realizing the charm of style; and, in that winter of 1654, enlightenment was forced upon the reading world, as eager eyes devoured the first of the Provincial Letters.

Therewith began a new era for Port-Royal. It had produced the bloom for which—as it seems to us looking at that period as a whole—the French Academy and the Hôtel Rambouillet, and the followers of Malherbe and of Balzac, had all alike been seeking. The literary instinct had a curious ascendency during most of the century in every grade of society save the lowest, and

though its result was more evident at the zenith of the great Monarch's reign, it had been dominant before his birth. And with the advent of Pascal Port-Royal ceased to be regarded as exclusively the domain of theologian and dévote: it was no longer possible to affect ignorance of it if one desired to be abreast with the thought of the times. The Provincial Letters are among the chief glories of French literature, and their place was recognized at their first appearance; but it was recognized also that they were to be inseparable from Port-Royal. The first (they are written ostensibly by a citizen of Paris to his friend in the provinces) gives the story of Arnauld's treatment by the Sorbonne (the verdict was not yet arrived at), the second and third are on the same topic, over which the gossips were buzzing at the moment, and the two last returned to the consideration of Jansenism;* but the rest—that is to say, thirteen—are an attack upon the Jesuits, so extraordinarily witty, so vigorous, and so severe, that the archives of polemic literature, fruitful though they are in brilliant writing, can produce nothing comparable.

After the appearance of the first Provincial Letter the mention of Port-Royal suggested the work of Blaise Pascal, and, as the years passed, men's minds attached more and more the idea of learning and wit and intellectual attainment to the name that had once represented only a small community of nuns. The destiny of Port-Royal was a strange one: we see that from end to end it was full of contradictions and surprises; we see that its place in history is not that which its first leaders would have claimed for it, and that the memory of it was revered by many whose reverence la Mère Angélique would not have coveted or valued; but though we cannot withhold from the Pascal of the Provincial Letters the tribute of awe-struck admiration which his genius claims, it is necessary to face the fact that it is a far cry from the spirit of the Provincial Letters to the teaching of la Mère Angélique. This new epoch upon which Port-Royal was entering, the epoch in which it was linked with the fame of

* Sainte Beuve, "Port-Royal," vol. iii. p. 44.

Nicole and of Racine and even of Boileau; though it was glorified by much achievement and by much patient enduring of suffering, was characterized by other influences than those of Angélique Arnauld and the Abbé de Saint-Cyran.

It has been said of the Provincial Letters that "this work, more than any other, has fixed the French language," * and that its "intellectual perfection flows immediately from the moral purpose which animates it;" we are told that there is passion in Pascal's logic and logic in his passion; that he is fighting the battle of all mankind against the corrupting influence of casuistry, and as the multitude of his proofs increases, so also does the intensity of his indignation.† In so far as it is possible to sum up in a sentence a work of such immensity, that is no unfitting summing-up of the work of Pascal; but, in its very aptness to its theme, it reveals, as though by a swift lantern flash, the gulf that yawned between the new Port-Royal and the old. We look at the Pascal of those letters (the hero of the hour, despite his anonymity), and we realize the artist nature which no asceticism had had power to quell, the leaping joy of achievement which is utterly intellectual, wholly unspiritual; the desire of conquering ‡ by means of a wit that was itself unconquerable, and, ever and again, we catch "the far-off echo of Vanity Fair," and are reminded that it was because he knew his world so well that he could press his weapon home as no mere scholar and recluse might do. From Pascal we turn to the school of strong and ardent controversialists that followed him—an undoubted power in their day, and each individually a self-devoted defender of the truth as he conceived of it—and we salute them with the respect they merit. But, as we look, the dominant thought regarding them and their achievements is that they also fought "the battle of all mankind against the corrupting influence of casuistry." A battle well worth fighting doubtless, and by them fought manfully, but it was not

* Jowett, "Biographical Sermons," No. 5. (Cf. Voltaire, "Siècle de Louis XIV.": "Il faut rapporter à cet ouvrage l'epoque de la fixation du langage.")

† Jowett, "Biographical Sermons," No. 5.

‡ Cf. the comment of Voltaire, "Siècle de Louis XIV.," ch. 208: "Il ne s'agissait pas d'avoir raison, il s'agissait de divertir le public."

the battle that la Mère Angélique had made her life-work, nor was intensity of indignation against others the mental standpoint which she was wont to cultivate. It is then at that point of the Provincial Letters that the links between Angélique and literary Port-Royal are severed; the difference between her and their writer is as the difference betwixt two generations when the representative of each holds closely to the traditions of his day; one has grown from the other, and each has its own excellence, yet their very nearness suggests and intensifies their contrasts and antagonisms. The glory of literary Port-Royal is the Provincial Letters, but, as we make that admission, let us not forget that Port-Royal had its literary position before Pascal and de Saçi ever met, for it was by reason of its literary reputation that Pascal was first drawn thither, and that reputation had, in a certain circle, a very definite and recognized existence. With it, and in it, Angélique Arnauld has her share; with the triumph of a later day she had no link either of sympathy or responsibility.

It may be a subject for regret, but it is consistent with the original spirit of Port-Royal, that the first hermits left but little accomplished work. Le Maistre translated S. Chrysostom, and began to write a series of lives of the Saints. Herein he was specially encouraged by Angélique, whose steady good sense detected the evil of the fabulous legends that had been foisted on the credulity of the ignorant. "I know not what one may believe about the lives of the Saints," said she, truly enough, "there is so much fable in the records of many of them."* To disentangle the residue of fact would have been work worth doing, but Le Maistre seems to have been too deeply imbued with Saint-Cyran's maxim "de fuire la bonne œuvre" to carry it through. He edited and arranged a few books of devotion, and he gave his aid to Antoine Arnauld when it was called for, even acting as secretary to him after the death of de Sericourt (which seems to have been the sharpest tax that was ever laid on his humility). There is also a volume of orations published against his will, which bears his name on the title-page. But the immense

* "Lettres," vol. ii. No. 450.

effect he produced on his generation was due rather to abstinence than to accomplishment. It was summarized aptly enough by de Gomberville of the Academy, in indifferent poetry, after the manner of the time—

> "Je te dirai ce que je pense,'
> O grand exemple de nos jours,
> J'admire tes nobles discours,
> Mais j'admire plus ton silence."

And if we give close attention to the teaching of Saint-Cyran, and realize that Le Maistre had accepted his guidance unreservedly, we shall see that this silence and sterility of his was almost inevitable. Saint-Cyran, we are told, "required that one should write even as one prayed, that is to say, with the same deference and the same submission towards Divine Glory. He counselled that the heart should be continually inclined towards God, so that nothing might be said which was not inspired by Him, so that work becoming prayer must secure His blessing on its results." * That is a council of perfection, and pens would flow somewhat less freely than they do if it was put in practice. We may accept it that Le Maistre made it his rule from the beginning of his retreat, but the spirit of it was worked out in detail by the directions which Saint-Cyran, newly released from his imprisonment, brought with him when he visited Port-Royal des Champs, and was able once again to speak to his faithful disciple face to face. We can read the result of those directions into the work of de Saçi,† of Lancelot, of du Fossé, of Sainte Marthe, as well as into that of Le Maistre himself; but when we turn to Pascal, we must forget them, and Antoine Arnauld, despite his honest and single-minded purpose, may be more justly judged by other standards. Saint-Cyran's requirements are not less searching for their absolute simplicity, and recall the rules made by Angélique when in retreat under him rather than any code ever before prescribed by a scholar and student to his followers. Their scope will hardly reveal itself, save by a practical

* Lancelot, "Mem. de Saint-Cyran," vol. ii. p. 129.

† The Bible was translated into French by de Saçi.

application to any work in hand; but their actual substance may be given with that brevity which Saint-Cyran loved.

They were four in number:

I. To have no thought of the world's opinion in writing.

II. To pray often, whether engaged in study, or in writing, and always at the beginning, in the middle, at the end.

III. To combine some manual labour or work of charity that tends to humiliation, with study.

IV. In leaving study for prayer, or for some work of charity, never to let the eyes of the mind stray back to the books or reflections which were more congenial than that which superseded them.*

As we read, the life led by the first hermits of Port-Royal rises once more before us, the witness to a self-indulgent world of the true conquest of himself to which man may attain. For despite the greatness of the gifts with which some among them had been endowed by God, despite a faculty of penetration well fitted to pierce disguise and expose fallacy among their enemies, despite a conviction of the truth that the keenest of controversialists might envy, the first hermits of Port-Royal were one and all content with de Saçi's motto, "Dependre de Dieu, s'humilier et souffrir," and believed that silence was the fittest expression of their view of life.

Thus, in their seclusion, by self-repression, and in continual prayer, they bore their part in the work for which Port-Royal had been destined, and testified to the strange contrast betwixt their intepretation of their leader's maxims and those dark and sinister designs which were displayed to the world as "le bût de l'Abbé de Saint-Cyran."

* See also Saint-Cyran to Le Maistre. Fontaine, "Mem.," vol. ii. p. 67.

CHAPTER X

THE PERSECUTION OF PORT-ROYAL

The life-story of Angélique Arnauld cannot be traced without some tribute of attention to theological disputes, nor can her inner development be truly viewed without reference to the progress of national affairs. For those were years when politics were a matter of close personal import to French subjects, when the convulsions, that make the history of the time intricate, meant danger to the safety and the comfort of the humble as well as of the great. It is typical of the attitude of the Port-Royalists towards a misguided and unrepentant world that the tremendous significance of the death of Richelieu was limited in their regard, to its effect upon the fortunes of Saint-Cyran ; no word of reference to it from any other point of view is to be found in letters or memoirs emanating from them. Yet it is difficult to believe that in actual fact they were completely indifferent to the outward conditions of a people for whose spiritual welfare they were offering ardent and continuous prayer. The death of Richelieu did, indeed, result in the release of his captive from unjust imprisonment at Vincennes, and so was of infinite import at Port-Royal, but Saint-Cyran only enjoyed his liberty a few months and then died, and when dead he dwelt at Port-Royal as a memory and an influence, and so renewed in the minds of nuns and hermits the sense that death was not for them the greatest of events, but a mere landmark in the path of their development. We are told that when the news of Saint-Cyran's death was brought to Angélique she shed no tears nor altered a detail of the day's routine, she asked no questions of the messenger or permitted herself any exclamation of surprise or grief, though the end was sudden. She said three

words only, "Dominus in Cœlo," and so paid her tribute to a friendship that had gone to the root of life, and hid her grief in silence.

But Death wears another guise in the world outside Port-Royal, and there his power is most impressive when he finds a victim such as Richelieu. To the Port-Royalists and to all who dwelt in France, that death meant a train of consequences that were impossible to evade; for the Cardinal had held his subjects in a bondage that they hardly realized till it was removed, and the great reaction, that grew to its climax in the ensuing years, was so fruitful in misery and disaster, that men and women whose lives were dedicated to suffering and service would have proved false to their vocation had they shirked their share. "The King and every one else were dying of ennui under Richelieu," says Michelet; "the whole scene grew dim and hazy save for the outline of the great actor, the solitary iron figure." * The minds of men, indeed, grew strained in the effort of watching him; they needed the interlude of an uncertain rule to prepare them for the demands of his successor, and, in the years of lawlessness with which they celebrated their emancipation, they were unwittingly educating the despot of the future by practical lessons more indelible than the precepts of the most experienced master. Only Richelieu himself knew how completely the guidance of the State was in his grasp, and he could not see another hand fitted to take the sceptre when he was forced to lay it down.

Under his avarice and ambition lay the love of his country which in a strong man becomes a passion, and for him to look forward meant to court an agony of apprehension. At Port-Royal there was a remedy for the most poignant fear that can result from an attempt to read the secrets of the future. Death and failure and disaster could only wring from the lips of la Mère Angélique the solemn utterance that, fully comprehended, has power to stifle all misgiving and uncertainty, but, when death was approaching Richelieu, no words were further from him than the "Dominus in Cœlo" of the Port-Royal nun. Relying

* "Hist. de France," vol. xii. p. 155.

supremely on himself in the present, he had no resource but to project that same reliance into the future, and the form of his aspiration after immortality found characteristic expression in these words, written as death approached: "Si mon ombre peut après ma mort contribuer quelquechose au règlement de ce grand Etat, je m'estimerai extrèmement heureux." * This is the spirit of self-worship in its absolute and final form, summed up in a sentence, suggesting a vast world of amazed reflection, and yet written in the sincerity of unconscious arrogance. Richelieu believed himself supreme, and his belief refused to accept the thought of a world which no longer bowed to his supremacy. He died after a life that, counted by years, was brief; and those disasters which it had been his supreme desire to prevent, fell upon France when he could no longer guard her safety. While he lived the Fronde Rebellion was impossible, but, in the evolution of the French people, in the building up of that dazzling reign of Louis XIV., which means so much in the history of Europe, the Fronde Rebellion has its great and necessary part. Thus Richelieu, in his independence of a Power higher than his own, erred even in statecraft, and did not see that a heavy price of suffering must be paid for future triumph.

The Fronde was necessary to France; to Port-Royal it had a special message. The danger of the retired life of nun and hermit was an excessive detachment which held itself dispensed from human sympathies. But, when Condé marched with his rebel forces upon Paris, the sufferings of the people became the leading thought in the convent and precincts of Port-Royal, and powers latent there were made known, as otherwise they could not have been. And the Fronde itself, bewildering and complicated as it is, was, like the intellectual movement of the Hôtel Rambouillet and the reforms of Port-Royal, born of discontent, of that revolt against the actual which is the basis of reform. Only with the Frondists revolt was distorted at the outset and discontent missed the element of the Divine, and it was theirs to give the false expression to the same forces that had made Port-Royal what

* "Epître au Roi Testament Politique," Petitot Coll., vol. x. p. 271.

it was at the time of Saint-Cyran's death. Their very name suggests the spirit of "make-believe" that clings about them. The children in the streets aimed pebbles at each other from a sling they termed a fronde, and the great lords and ladies plunging light-heartedly into a struggle that owed its justice solely to the grievances of the people, took to themselves the epithet that had been levied at them as a sign of scorn. The most picturesque of historians sums them up thus in their conduct and experience—"Oublier, rire du tout, souffrir sans chercher de remède, se moquer de soi-même et mourir en riant, telle fut cette France d'alors." *

There perhaps lies the key to many a mystery of the time. The incurable levity that closed the ears of the world against all appeals to heart and conscience was the effect of environment, of a long series of impressions; of the support—so incalculable in its reality of strength—of custom and tradition. In the Fronde the chief actors were ruled by Love and Hate, by Revenge and Jealousy; the primitive passions, unbridled, undisciplined, ran riot, and the resulting chaos carried with it a lesson such as no human lips could teach. In the extreme of contrast stands Port-Royal, requiring that background to show its clear-cut outlines, requiring also that contact with human violence to give the atmosphere that brings spiritual aspiration and experience within range of ordinary vision. For the Fronde had its own practical relation to Port-Royal. No course of contemporary life was unaffected by it, but to Angélique and her sisters there came a special call to lessen the suffering for which the Fair Women, who for that moment swayed the destinies of France, were answerable. Under obedience the nuns turned from questions of conventual discipline, of ecclesiastical tradition applied to daily practice, and of that difficult theology whereon their own temporal welfare seemed often to depend; they left these things till a time when the people were not dying at the convent gates, and concentrated will and mind instead on the problem of providing for a multitude out of their own bare sufficiency.

* Michelet, "Hist. de France," vol. xii. p. 418.

Angélique Arnauld, bringing her strength and courage to the service of the suffering, filled with a great compassion that for the time banished all other thought save that of the pain that, under God, it was her part to solace, is a supremely moving figure. If we are tempted to recoil sometimes from her stern faith, and find in her a harshness inimical to the conception of a God of Love, this aspect of her goes far to reconcile us to self-repression that did not blight the generous largeness of her charity towards others.

Probably the storm that broke over Port-Royal was deferred for a time by the breaking of that other storm over France. The insatiable desires of the nobles which it had required the hand of Richelieu to control were not adequately checked by the freakish domination of an arrogant woman. Anne of Austria owed any wisdom that her policy could ever claim to Mazarin, but his subtle craft could not supply his want of knowledge of the race with whom he had to deal, and, when the discontent of the people had gathered to sufficient volume, the smouldering elements of anarchy blazed out into that futile and abortive revolution called the Fronde. The death of Saint-Cyran in 1643 took place within a year of the deaths of Louis XIII. and of Richelieu. During the first period of the ensuing Regency there was a cessation of open warfare in matters political and theological, but, though the future combatants refrained from open hostilities, they were measuring their ground and testing the weapons they had chosen. Then in 1648 the reign of Misrule began, and from the exactions of that monarch even Port-Royal was not exempt.

We have already noted that the general distress gave scope for the display of qualities in Angélique Arnauld that her ordinary experience held in abeyance. It would be impossible to forget that her love of souls was as great as that of M. Singlin himself, that she spent herself continually in watchfulness over all those whom she believed had been given her by God as a sacred charge. "I am in constant work," she wrote once, "talking to my sisters here and writing to those at Port-Royal des Champs, besides all other claims." * What was true of that particular moment was

* "Lettres," vol. ii. No. 573 (1653).

true always, her spiritual labour was incessant, but we are less often reminded of her mundane avocations. Her response when the other demand did come, however, made it clear that the spiritual practice had in nowise lessened the practical capacity.

There is, indeed, a peculiar charm in the picture presented by the letters of la Mère Angélique of Port Royal in relation to the war. The poor—among whom there was little hope of future advantage from the upheaval, and positive certainty of present suffering—looked to the convent as to the one solid rock where all else was morass. They brought their grain, their live stock, and their few household gods to the keeping of the Mother-Abbess, till the courtyard was full of poultry, and the body of the church with sacks of wheat.* When their suffering became more pressing they came to her themselves. She gave a recipe in one of her letters for making nourishing soup in vast quantities at the smallest possible cost; she tells of the pitiful incidents around her, of the danger from violence and from starvation; not least, perhaps, was the danger of despair, for miserable mothers were tempted to slay their children rather than leave them to the endurance of such misery. All these things affected her—more deeply, perhaps, than is consistent with her customary scorn of temporal considerations. She sent a specimen of the bread the poor were eating to Agnès in Paris, that she might realize their misery, and tells how many came day after day to the convent door in the last stage of starvation, while those more fortunate only nourished themselves on cabbage boiled in water with no seasoning of salt. Yet in herself it is clear that the old fighting instinct that had sustained her in her fiery trial at Maubuisson was once more aroused. "We are all well and cheerful, thanks be to God," she wrote; "He gives us confidence in Him, which is far stronger than our fear of men."† And again, with the note of excitement which must have been priceless to the faint-hearted: "Our dear hermits have all resumed their swords for our defence, and have made such fine barricades that it would be hard to invade us."‡

* "Lettres," vol. i. Nos. 246, 259; vol. ii. No. 410.

† Ibid., vol. i. No. 246.

‡ Ibid., vol. i. No. 269.

Possibly there were a few among those same dear hermits in whom the old man was not so extinct but that a thrill of exultation welcomed the touch of a sword-hilt once again. There were among them gallant gentlemen who had been trained to arms, and who must at times have hungered for the clash of steel, as Saint-Cyran, or Le Maistre, or Antoine Arnauld would have hungered for the sight of a printed page, had they been summoned to renounce all intercourse with books for the rest of their natural life. Yet in that return to the past, we see a type of the gain that had come to them. It was no longer to win personal honour, to carve the way to fortune, or exalt themselves in the sight of their fellows. The call came first to defend the convent. And because of its defenders it won new strength, for nuns from other and less fortunate communities besought for shelter with their sisters at Port-Royal, and Angélique, though she extended the temporal help with gladness, was fully alive to the opportunity it gave her of touching the deeper and more lasting side of life. Thus, when the moment of crisis passed, many a gentle nun, returning to the practice of her own Rule under its old conditions, took with her a new light, till then concealed from her, though it was familiar to the simplest among those whom Angélique had nurtured. It would have been impossible to conceive a more fruitful opportunity for spreading the doctrine of Port-Royal than that which the rebellion and the answering gallantry of the hermits offered, and probably no after-measures of authority could do much to lessen its results on the religious life of France. It was, it appears, quite impossible to come in personal contact with Angélique Arnauld and remain unaffected, and her correspondence proves the width of her range of influence. She became, in the years immediately succeeding the Fronde, a sort of oracle on all questions closely touching monastic life. "Nous sommes assassinées de Réligieuses," she wrote in a sort of despair, when in 1652 she had returned to Paris, and was therefore more easy of access—"il en est venu 300 nous voir." * And if only a tithe of that number really received the message that

* "Lettres," vol. ii. p. 438.

Angélique desired to impart, there still could be no fear that the truth would lack witnesses in hidden strongholds where persecution did not penetrate.

Thus the men of the sword bore their part. The hermits were not in name a community, nevertheless they realized that ideal of corporate life which is a strong bulwark of monasticism, the several members, each so individual, finding its necessary place in a great whole, and, by effectual working of the lower task, becoming essential to the right completion of the higher. And their privilege did not stop there. It was given to them to typify the oft-repeated promise to the humble. They were, in that time of stress, called to an office above their aspirations. Not one of those who had left the world to serve Christ, according to their own lights and the example of Antoine Le Maistre, in the solitudes of Port-Royal, had thought that his vocation justified him in aspiring to sacred orders. It was their habit to esteem the nuns of the Blessed Sacrament as on a plane above themselves, called to an office beyond their reach. Yet the time came when the most precious office of the nuns devolved upon the hermits. In that time when, as la Mère Angélique wrote, the courtyard was full of poultry and the church of grain, and the choir of the books of the students, it was felt that the Treasure of their Altar was not safe from sacrilegious hands. It was, therefore, removed to the chapel at the Château de Vaumurier (which that temporary hermit the Duc de Liancourt had built in the near neighbourhood of Port-Royal). The nuns of the Order of Adoration, deprived of necessity of their sacred charge, sought refuge with their sisters in the Faubourg S. Jacques, and the hermits were left, not only to defend the chapel at Vaumurier, but also to maintain the continual vigil of Adoration * that the Rule of Port-Royal prescribed. Nor is there, among all the anecdotes and reminiscences incident to the strange lives of these anchorites, a suggestion more moving than that of the silent figures in the chapel at Vaumurier, watchful with a sentinel's alertness for the approach of the enemy; ready, and even eager, to meet assault; yet all the while, despite

* "Lettres," vol. ii. p. 432.

the drawn sword and muscles braced for action, prostrate in spirit before the great Treasure of their faith.

Their vigilance and their prayers saved them. But the suffering on every hand involved all that is most appalling to the human imagination. Civil strife and the presence of foreign mercenaries among a defenceless peasantry produces the worst horrors of war. There is sufficient indication of the misery of the people in Angélique's letters alone, and in reading them we are pierced, as she herself was, by the sense of the incurable levity that had produced it all, and, having produced it, could be indifferent to the responsibility. There was a catch sung about the streets of Paris in those days which seized the full irony of the conditions of society. It was put, somewhat unfairly, into the mouth of the boy-king, who was least answerable of all those who sat in high places, although, in popular opinion, he was made the scapegoat. It ran thus—

"Si la France est en deuil, s'il pleure et soupire
Pour moi je vais chanter galantiser et rire." *

The King was but a child still, taking his point of view from those about him, but the couplet might fitly have been sung in chorus by the brave men and fair ladies whose thirst for excitement and vain self-interest had brought the Fronde and its agony on the poor of France in the fields and in the city.

Port-Royal looked on, seeing, in the whole terrible picture, new justification of the estimate of human relations to present existence it had already accepted. "Can you imagine, Madame," wrote Angélique to the Queen of Poland, "that, amid all the horrors which your Majesty knows we are enduring, and of which the details cannot be given without shrinking, people still go to the Comedy at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, and those who are not themselves involved in the agony of the moment give so little heed to that of their neighbour that they are just as eager over their amusements as in a time of peace, and—which is even worse—they will not listen to the preachers who speak of penitence. Your Majesty will judge for herself whether this hardness

* See Feillet, "Misère au Temps de la Fronde," p. 355.

of heart does not increasingly draw down the just wrath of God, and if it is not the darkest omen that we could have that His Hand will be laid yet more heavily upon us." * And again, a little later, 'The Court and the Tuileries are as gay as ever, supper-parties and all the other frivolities go on as usual; all the horrible sights of which the streets are full, the frequency of murder in the streets and at the gates, the frightful dearness of everything, has no power to touch their hearts or teach them to fear the wrath of God. So great is the hard-heartedness of sinners." †

The call to Port-Royal was obvious. "I realize every day," wrote Angélique once, "that our greatest charity towards our neighbour lies in praying much for him; that should come before anything else that we may do for him, for nothing else can be of any service unless God by His grace blesses both it and us." ‡ Therefore, while Port-Royal des Champs was once more left desolate, in the Faubourg S. Jacques they betook themselves to prayer, in the strong hope that those whose eyes were opened to a knowledge of the one remedy for human ills, might by importunate supplication win help for their brothers and sisters, rich or poor, who still suffered and groaned in darkness.

We are reminded with a persistency that admits of no evasion that to Angélique Arnauld the more subtle difficulties of the mystery of prayer did not present themselves. There was a great simplicity in the faith she held; for others she could ask temporal blessings, but for herself it is not likely that she ever desired of God any earthly solace or advantage. She was definitely afraid of good fortune, regarding it apparently as a proof that in the sight of God she was not worthy to suffer for His sake. She wrote once to de Barcos § that one of her great troubles was the amount of outward benefits that God was bestowing on her, which made her feel that because her love lacked purity and sincerity it was being recompensed according to its merit. "Every one else is in misfortune, and it would seem

* "Lettres," vol. ii. No. 465.
† Ibid., vol. ii. No. 455.
‡ Ibid., vol. i. No. 253.
§ Nephew of Saint-Cyran.

that for us God has only consolation. Our friends are all more careful of our welfare than of themselves." *

The year in which she wrote these words (1652) saw France at a climax of misery; the country was devastated, the people were despairing. But if Port-Royal was enjoying a peace in the midst of tumult, its independence of temporal comfort and convenience was in large measure responsible for its immunity. Its position in that time of political earthquake was, in fact, as of a sanctuary set on a firm foundation where all else was tottering, and Angélique's wondering realization of their prosperity as compared to the lot of others was not as fanciful as the apprehensions that she linked to it. But, while those around her sounded the lowest depths of the suffering destined for them, Port-Royal was only on the threshold of its hour of trial, and thenceforward there was no more occasion for those misgivings that they were too prosperous for sanctity that had momentarily aroused her apprehensions. In the comparative silence that succeeded the flight of Condé and the end of the civil war, the voices that had already been uplifted against Port-Royal became more insistent than they had been before that ghastly interruption of ordinary developments. We have glanced at the reasons and motives of their clamour, but its true importance as regards la Mère Angélique is independent of the points of theology at issue. It lies in the spiritual effect on those who suffered. True knowledge of those quiet nuns, who, for all their separate individuality, had each some reflection of the spirit of their Mother-Abbess, could never have reached us if the stress of persecution had not revealed them to themselves and to the world. "Purs comme les anges, fières comme les démons," † they are still present with us as an inspiring picture, not less worthy of remembrance because we may deem their point of view mistaken and their zeal distorted.

Within the convent walls one may safely assume that there were many who recked nothing of the various interpretations

* "Lettres," vol. ii. No. 422.

† Comment of de Perefixe, Archbishop of Paris, on the nuns of Port-Royal.

of S. Augustine, and would have maintained the even tenor of their way unmoved by all the arguments in all the volumes written by Antoine Arnauld and his opponent. The teaching of S. Augustine had reached them because they had been successively under the direction of Saint-Cyran and M. Singlin and de Saçi, but they had been taught to gather from him not any profound theory on questions of predestination and grace, but the conception (in so far as the human mind may seek it) of the greatness and the love of God. "Dépendre de Dieu, s'humilier et souffrir"—that was their doctrine of S. Augustine, and, having found the blessing of it by constant practical interpretation, they were more impregnable to all attack of argument than if their convictions had been based on individual research.

At first, when a rumour of the accusations brought against them came to their ears, they could receive it only with the mild astonishment of a wise man regarding the delusions of a lunatic. It was hard to give serious credence to such folly, impossible to believe that it could have any considerable result. Their experience had long been limited to the "vie intime" of Port-Royal; they knew, one and all, in such varying degree as corresponded to their temperament, that at Port-Royal the religious life was realized with the most passionate intensity; that the self-surrender of their profession had been no barren form, but a dedication of themselves to Christ wherein they were sustained by the spiritual help His Church provided. Loyalty to the Church was a strong element in all their thoughts, so strong as to seem outside the range of criticism. They were all imbued with Saint-Cyran's theories, and no one cherished a more awe-inspiring idea of the privilege of priesthood than he. They had that unquestioning and simple-minded faith in the Pope which is the heritage of those who have grown up within the fold of the Roman Church,* and they were all specially consecrated to the perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. When we realize their simple-minded orthodoxy in all essential points of the faith, we see that it must

* See "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," No. 187.

have been very difficult for them to assimilate the knowledge that many well-meaning persons were being taught to regard them as Calvinists; and that they were sometimes represented as being in league with Cromwell, at whose iniquities the subjects of the Great Monarch looked on in horror. Not so long since the cry had been raised against Port-Royal that their preaching and practice of silence and seclusion would undermine the principles of human intercourse. We can recognize that that accusation was not altogether without foundation, but it is hard to trace from it any sequence to the charge of joining forces with all the malcontents and seditious spirits of other countries—"our sole hope is to flee from the world, not to intrigue with it," was Angélique's bitter comment.*

There was no end to the calumnies that were spread about in Paris. The spiritual children of the Jesuits were so innumerable that every grade of society was permeated with the suggestions the Jesuits chose to promulgate. It was supposed that the first Bull against the Five Propositions would be fatal to the prestige of Port-Royal, for it is probable that the Jesuits themselves had misconceived the position, and did not realize that the nuns of Port-Royal were faithful daughters of the Church, and, for the most part, as ignorant of theology as other women. And the nuns, as they grew conscious of the feeling that was being stirred up against them, were aghast at it, but their sense of its injustice far exceeded any apprehension of its consequences. "They talk of nothing less than burning or throwing us into the river," wrote Angélique, in one of those graphic letters to the Queen of Poland wherein the externals of her life are preserved to us with such admirable clearness; "throughout Paris they have scattered leaflets with an exhortation to praise God on account of the ruin of the Jansenists, which, as your Majesty knows, is the unjust name they give to us who have no desire to be aught but Christians and Catholics." †

When party feeling ran so high each check seemed to increase its violence. Arnauld's great book on Frequent Communion

* "Lettres," vol. ii. No. 613. † Ibid., No. 696 (1654).

was not condemned at the Vatican, in spite of every effort of his enemies, and the first Formula professing agreement with the censure of the Five Propositions (but not, as they interpreted it, of the "Augustinus" itself) was signed with great composure by the Jansenists. At Port-Royal they said that they were in no wise disturbed by it; "we condemn what it condemns without knowing what it is; for it is enough to know that it is given by the Pope, and because we are daughters of the Church we are bound to revere every decree of the Holy See."* There is a ring of confidence in the words that is infinitely pitiful in view of subsequent developments. It was so impossible, even as daughters of the Church, to see their way clear in the labyrinth of difficulty that the Church herself was preparing for them, and it must have seemed to them a hard dispensation that the world would not leave them in peace, when they asked so little of the world. All that they asked was, in fact, to be independent of it, to pass their days under the rule of monotony, to watch and pray and fast, and to fulfil their allotted part in helping the poor or training the young.

It was a humble demand truly, and it should be remembered that many of those quiet figures who filed into the choir of the convent chapel might have claimed a place where all that is most glittering and alluring of the world's treasures would have been within their grasp. They had come to Port-Royal instead, with eager hands outstretched to receive the treasure of the religious life—coming as though impelled to come, yet of their own free will, for la Mère Angélique would countenance no forced vocations. It was folly to attribute ulterior motives to women who had thus hidden their beauty beneath the habit of the religious and laid on the altar the golden prospects that the world's joy offers to the young, in the faith that the void thus left would not go long unfilled. Had they desired power and influence over the minds of men, many of them might have been confident of obtaining it by the way of marriage and by mixing in the society of the time. There were brilliant and beautiful women among

* "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," No. 187 (1653).

the nuns of Port-Royal, and that was peculiarly an age when women reigned by right of personality. But such dominion was not their object; their strong belief that they were the chosen of Christ sufficed for all the cravings that were inherent in them, and convent walls meant no confinement.

Not often is it the lot of man or woman to fulfil an ideal as was the ideal of Angélique Arnauld fulfilled by the Community she had reformed. Yet even there, perhaps, as the years passed, the danger of prosperity, however limited and chastened, might have declared itself. It was, it is well to notice, a danger whose existence in the religious life was clearly recognized by Saint-Cyran. Lancelot records that he was wont to say that there was no greater danger than that which assailed those who had retired from the world, of *making for themselves a little world apart from the great world*, and he would add, that there were few persons who did not, when they gave themselves to God, keep some door open; whereas it was necessary to yield to Him unreservedly, if we would be perfect, and so entrust Him absolutely with all that concerns us; that we destroyed all by our secret longings, by the human point of view that often governed a part of our actions, by our habit of reserve with God.* The same warning is given repeatedly by every writer familiar with the religious life, from Thomas à Kempis to those of our own day, and, because the rule of obedience does not suppress individuality, and the nuns of Port-Royal showed themselves to be passionately human in instinct and in feeling, there is no reason to believe that they would have been exempt from the snare that entrapped others, that snare "de proprio quæsitu," which S. Teresa herself† could never be confident of evading.

Therefore, as we follow their history, if we desire to trace the working of the Divine purpose which had seemed to select them to give the light of example in an age of shadows, we may hardly see it clearer than in their hours of sharpest suffering, and are taught to echo the comment of a contemporary who, though

* Lancelot, "Vie de Saint-Cyran," vol. ii. p. 347.

† See Autobiography, ch. xiii.

he made their griefs his own, could write: "Il y a donc moins sujet de deplorer le sort de Port-Royal que d'admirer la conduite de Dieu pour la perfection de Ses Saints." *

We have seen that when Saint-Cyran first became a power at Port-Royal, appearing to bring protection and guidance and inspiration just at the moment when it was most needed, it was possible to regard the previous history of the community as a preparation that exactly fitted it to receive what he had to give.† La Mère Angélique—and her nuns by means of her—seemed to be waiting for him, and he equally was seeking the environment that was the work of la Mère Angélique. He gave much where much was needed, for she was in dire straits when he came to her, but he received as much as he gave; the previous work of each was the complement of that of the other. Similarly, and with just the same completeness, the work of Saint-Cyran and Singlin and Ste. Marthe and de Saçi was crowned rather than injured by the fate that overtook Port-Royal. No man could have foretold the extent of the suffering that futurity had for those unoffending nuns, but the teaching they received from Saint-Cyran and his followers was adapted to prepare them for martyrdom, and to have lived and died in the quiet seclusion of their convent would not so well have justified their claim to the declaration that each one of them desired to make her own: "Mihi mundus crucifixus est et ego mundo."

It was, indeed, a discipline for the perfection of saints that awaited them. The wise had heard the first mutterings of a storm when the enemies of Zamet rose up against "Le Chapelet Secret," but when Richelieu took violent action against Saint-Cyran, the danger seemed to sweep away from the convent precincts. The prayers and thoughts of la Mère Angélique and her daughters might centre at the prison of Vincennes, but they suffered no actual deprivation save that of Saint-Cyran's presence. Nor did the gusts aroused by Antoine Arnauld at first touch them very

* "L'ame vivement touchée," etc., Introduction (1695).

† Cf. A. Vinet, "Etudes sur la Litt. Fran.," vol. iii.: art. "Port-Royal."

nearly, and they managed to conform to the censure of the Five Propositions in 1653 without applying it to their faith in Saint-Cyran and Jansenius. We know that they acted thus under obedience, yet that signature to the first Formula savours too much of sophistry to be altogether satisfying, and they gained little by evasion. The Jesuits, who had expected they would resist the formula and so convict themselves, represented that they were fit objects of suspicion, and induced the King and his mother in 1656 to withdraw their licence to receive pupils or postulants. Popular opinion caused a reaction in their favour, and these privileges (necessary to their continued existence) were restored, but they remained under the ban of royal and archiepiscopal displeasure, and in continual expectation of the decisive blow which fell in 1661. So that all semblance of prosperity may be regarded as leaving them for ever when the war of the Fronde was over, and the King had leisure to listen to those who imposed upon his youth and ignorance.

Angélique Arnauld was sixty-five when persecution began to press heavily upon her. Her life hitherto had been full and strenuous, at that moment she held the responsibility of office, and every misfortune to the community was at all times personal to her; nevertheless, her courage alone, heavily taxed as it was, was sufficient to animate her sisters, and was to remain with them as an inspiration long after she herself was dead. It is told of her that, going to Port-Royal des Champs from Paris when their troubles were crowding thick about them, she was received there by a tearful and trembling group; whereupon the Angélique of former days, the Mother-Abbess, who had defied tradition at Port-Royal and force at Maubuisson more than forty years before, flashed into being once again before the eyes of her astonished daughters. Age and weariness and care were all forgotten as she turned on them as though they had been a tribe of their own pensionnaires. "What—are there tears here!" cried she. "How can that be? Have we no faith remaining? And what do we shrink from? What—there are folk threatening us? Bah! they are but flies; are you afraid of them? You

trust in God, and yet are fearful! Be assured that if you fear Him only you will be safe enough." *

That, unvaryingly, was the substance of her response to threats or to condolence. "When God fails my courage fails; so long as God is God, my hope is in Him." † She said once, referring to the calumnies levied at M. Singlin: "None of it troubled him, for he looked towards God only." ‡ In her own darkest hour the same might have been said of herself, and though that point of view is but the natural outcome of her profession, it must be acknowledged to be so rare that her absolutely practical application of it to external difficulty is curiously impressive. It was not unlikely at one moment that the violence of her enemies would bring about her removal from Port-Royal. In actual fact, a few years after her death, la Mère Agnès and the most influential among the community were scattered among different convents where the feeling was so much against them that their presence was no danger. Angélique expected such a fate as this, and her friends feared it for her, but she did not flinch from the thought in the least degree. "I am prepared to leave Port-Royal behind," she said, "and spend years in some monastery under Jesuit dominion, maintaining a profound silence. There would be nothing to distress me so long as they did not come and talk to me to convict me of error. I should have nothing to say to them, except to tell them that in the forty-five years and more since my conversion, I have asked God many times to grant—if I might not as I ardently desired be freed altogether from my office—that by His grace I might at least be allowed to pass the last years of my life in some strange place where they would not pay me respect as they do here and where they would not love me, to the end that I might imitate Jesus Christ, who was left desolate at His death. And I should thank God if by their means He permitted my desire to be fulfilled." §

* N. Fontaine, "Mem.," vol. iii.

† "Lettres," vol. ii. No. 239.

‡ To Le Maistre, Relation de la Mère Angélique, Appendix, Entretiens, xix.

§ Ibid.

Without doubt she made that declaration in all sincerity, and would have ended her days in humiliation and solitude without repining had the summons come. But her enemies probably realized that la Mère Angélique was too widely known and revered (even by some who differed from her) for any personal violence to be offered to her without raising an outcry, and thus the reputation which endangered her was also her safeguard and protection.

In truth, at that crisis the nuns of Port-Royal attempted to realize the meaning of avidity of suffering. S. Paul glowed with that fire, and one and another of the saints have borne their witness. The modern world reads of them, recognizes the beauty of the sentiment that animated them, and admires vaguely. At Port-Royal sentiment was forgotten in experience, though the experience did not come to all in equal measure, for some met it shrinkingly, suffered in shrinking, and ended by attaining a tranquillity in suffering greater than that of their more fearless sisters. But that the spirit of the nuns towards persecution cannot adequately be expressed as resignation is a point so important to understanding of them as to justify insistence on it. For their contemplation of the Christ, it must be remembered, centred always on the scene of Calvary. The element of awe, almost of terror, is lurking there, and it gave them the austerity and sternness that repelled waverers, and divided Port-Royal even from those who shared their aspirations and their creed. That influence of the suffering Christ is not easily to be accepted ; it demands gradual initiation.

But their Christ was (in the words of a recent writer*) "the Christ of S. Justin, of S. Basil, of Tertullian, the Christ of the early centuries of the Church, a Christ that is rugged, that is even repulsive, inasmuch as He has taken on Himself the sum of all sin, and in His humility has assumed the lowliest guise. This is the Christ of the Poor, He who has made Himself equal with the least of those He came to ransom, to the outcast and the beggar, to all those on whom the meanness and cowardice of man expends

* Huysman.

itself. Thus seen He is the most human Christ, the Christ in the flesh, weary and feeble, left desolate by the Father who does not intervene until no further suffering remains to be endured." And gazing upon Him thus, on the anguished face and on the human frame that human hands had mangled, the nuns of Port-Royal were possessed by "cette sainte folie de la croix" that taught them to desire suffering.

Among those who helped them in their darkest hours was one who also is well fitted to be their interpreter. When their enemies were most relentless he came to their relief, scaling walls and braving peril (with a courage that recalls the spirit of the Covenanters) that he might bring them the Blessed Sacrament and console them with proofs of determination equal to their own. He was known as M. de Ste. Marthe,* and was one of the Hermit-priests who joined Le Maistre. In him, perhaps, more than in any other of their guides, we can trace that peculiar enthusiasm of devotion, "le soif d'immolation," which is so much easier to deride than to acquire. And because, among the many voices from Port-Royal, his reaches us but rarely, there is the more reason that the testimony he bore to the light that was given them should be recognized in summing up the influence inward and outward that transformed those quiet women into undaunted champions of their faith. As we watch them accepting the deprivation of dignity and privilege, surrendering the children they had trained and loved to alien influences, confronting and defying the authorities who threatened them, and then bearing exile and separation and disgrace with unshaken fortitude, we may well recur to the exhortation of M. de Ste. Marthe that is preserved among their archives, and most surely had its place among the factors of their development.

Port-Royal was hemmed in by danger. There was no prospect for the faithful daughters of la Mère Angélique, for the followers of Saint-Cyran, save sorrow and humiliation and loneliness, and these are the words of M. de Ste. Marthe—

* M. de Ste. Marthe died 1690. For his life, see "Nécrologe de Port-Royal," vol. i. p. 399.

"It is great hardness of heart that ignores God's goodness to us, in treating us as He treated His own Son: it is a proof of blindness to repine: it is grieving the Holy Spirit to receive this great honour sadly and ungratefully, and finally there is no way by which we are so likely to make the cross of Jesus Christ of none effect as by refusing that which He offers us.

"We desire to advance towards Heaven: let us then walk in the path that leads thither—it is narrow, it is rough, it is very thorny: one may not enter on it save by much labour, one may not keep in it without being ready to accept every kind of suffering to the utmost limit of what men can inflict, the measure of pain depending on their will and not on ours. Let it be infinite, if that could be, O Saviour! that so in some degree it might reflect Thine own, and we ourselves be likened unto Thee. Let it be heavy and beyond our powers, that so it shall be needful for Thee to suffer with us and Thyself to be our patience and our strength.

"It is folly to imagine that we love Christ if we do not renounce and despise self. We are anxious to be virtuous, but we would fain be so in such wise that the world shall not disapprove or interfere with us.

"The only proof of the reality of our love for Him is to test whether we suffer for Him gladly. It is only by love that we can take up the cross in patient humility, it is only by love that we cling to it and bear it unto death.

"Being likened unto Thee, my Saviour, I would enter with Thee into a share of all Thy sorrows; give me grace that I have no glory save in the cross, grant that in imitation of Thee I may choose that which is despised and shameful rather than the honours of the world, for it is the truest greatness to despise all things for Thy sake." *

It is the cry of Thomas à Kempis, "Drink of the chalice of thy Lord lovingly." It is the summons of that Christ of the Poor, stretched on the cross, rugged, deserted, desolate—the summons that love alone can answer, to which the world is deaf

* "Vies Interessantes des Rel. de Port-Royal," vol. i. p. 71.

because the natural man clings to the prizes of the world, and the inherent instinct of human nature is to meet suffering with rebellion as well as shrinking. If to-day we give any thought at all to the words and works of the truth-seekers of a bygone time, it is with the pitying scorn of an enlightened generation towards the past. As the advance of civilization has almost extinguished fanaticism, so the increased facilities for luxury have made asceticism an absurdity. To the average mind that "clinging to the cross" has become but a phrase of bygone imagery with no practical relation to a life of busy useful common sense; with the life God gave us and all the joy that it may rightly offer, it were folly "to choose that which is despised and shameful!"

The thesis is so easy to maintain, the arguments so obvious, to those to whom the question is not vital, conviction comes so readily. Yet when all is said, and the wise and logical conclusion justly demonstrated, there remains an element of human thought, an instinct of the human will that wise words do not touch; the mystery, in short, that to the world ever remains unfathomable, that is ever hidden from the wise and prudent. At Port-Royal, where helplesss women accepted affliction and privation in the form that to them was most bitter and most torturing, there was given hourly and in silence an exposition of the possible reality of certain promises which the world receives with unreflecting admiration. As by degrees they came to understand that their enemies intended to crush the life of their beloved community out of existence, that the world was too strong for them and that to human eyes all their self-devotion, all their endeavour to uphold the truth, was wasted; then, one would think, despair might well have laid its icy touch upon them, and the petty daily sufferings to which many of them (dispersed to convents where they were looked upon as heretics) were subjected, might have broken their spirit and destroyed their faith. But, almost without exception, their sufferings had the reverse effect, and thus the persecutions of Port-Royal have a deeper psychologic value even than its reform, for they reveal

to us that the real fortitude of the nuns was based on something for which emotionalism could not account.

And it should here be observed that the community has, historically, lost more than it has gained by the celebrated miracles that, for a time, turned popular opinion in its favour, because those miracles, not being any longer inexplicable by natural laws, are seen to have produced an effect that was not absolutely legitimate. From la Mère Angélique to the youngest novice there was not one in whose mind there lurked the shadow of a doubt that God had interposed to save them from the Jesuits by a marvellous token of His good-will towards them. That, at a moment when their ruin was imminent, a most astonishing occurrence turned the tide of popular feeling so that their enemies were forced into a cessation of hostility, is a matter of history; that that incident was the work of Divine mercy, is a matter of ordinary faith; but that it belonged to the same order of supernatural events as those which were witnessed by the followers of Christ on the shores of Galilee, is a contention which it is no longer possible to support; and, where so much that was deep and true was misrepresented and overlooked, it is to be regretted that this—an utterly false impression—was generally accepted, and had enormous influence. Nevertheless, it would be an outrage to the spirit of Port-Royal if we should attempt to evade that which we deplore, for the miracles were undoubtedly of infinite importance to each one of the nuns, and to the fortunes of the Community as a whole.

The first took place in 1656,* when popular attention was directed towards the convent, and produced an immense sensation. The subject of it was Marguerite Perrier, niece to Blaise and Jacqueline Pascal, and at that moment pensionnaire at Port-Royal. She had suffered for three years from a growth on the left side of her face which had become so malignant that it was considered necessary to separate her from her companions. Burning was the only remedy suggested by the physicians, and the necessity had become so urgent that a letter had been

* N. Fontaine, "Mem.," vol. iii. p. 187.

dispatched to M. Perrier in Auvergne asking his consent to perform this operation. It was at this crisis that one of the nuns caused the child to kiss a Sacred Thorn which had been temporarily deposited on the altar of the chapel at Port-Royal. It is easy to picture the child, with the strong faith in the love of Jesus with which the true children of Port-Royal were imbued, pressing the case that contained the Relic to her face with a fervour enhanced by fear of future suffering. The faith of a child, when it really exists, is perfect. Marguerite Perrier, spiritualized by pain, may have had a moment of complete confidence that the Christ of the poor and the miserable would have pity on her misery. And so she said her prayer, and the Relic in its crystal case was reverently replaced upon the altar, and she left the chapel, her disfigured face being once more hidden. The excitement of the succeeding days probably banished from the mind of the child the recollection of her physical sensations. Port-Royal never doubted that the sacred contents of the crystal case had worked the cure that presently was clear to the eyes of all men ; they gave no thought to the possible effect of the hard substance of the case itself, pressed vigorously against the swelling. So clear did it seem that Christ had intervened to show the world that He acknowledged them as His servants, so close was their hold upon the spiritual aspect of life as distinguished from the natural, that the suggestion of a purely physical explanation would have seemed the basest ingratitude—almost a blasphemy.

In their endeavour to escape from the world's standards the Port-Royalists had, in fact, lost mental balance, but in making the admission the thought of the time must be remembered. Supernatural events were accepted generally on evidence that would now appear very insufficient. Men and women were burnt for witchcraft, and diabolic possession was regarded as one of the ills to which all human creatures might be subject. In the midst of so much that was utterly gross and carnal the sense of the mystery of existence, of the influence of the Unseen (whether for good or evil), was far more present, and more keenly recognized than in the present age of higher education and greater refinement.

Thus when it was discovered that the terrible gathering on the face of Marguerite Perrier had disappeared, it was felt that this was a direct Touch from the Hand of God. The physicians who came prepared to perform the dreaded operation accepted the view of the child's guardians. In view of the cloud of disgrace that hung over Port-Royal, however, they decided that they would not gossip about it. But one of them, falling ill almost immediately, he accepted his illness as a judgment for his cowardice, and the marvellous cure of Marguerite Perrier, known historically as the Miracle of the Sacred Thorn, was made known throughout Paris. Six doctors examined the child and attested the fact.* The King and Queen and Mazarin expressed their reverent astonishment,† their delight that Paris should have been the scene of such an event; the Cardinal Archbishop ordered that High Mass should be celebrated in the convent chapel, and Society flocked thither, wondering.

Any one who would, might see Marguerite Perrier; accredited persons might question her; there was no thought of concealment in any detail, and for a time the credit of Port-Royal bade fair to raise it above the assaults of its enemies. But the effect of that nine days' wonder could not be a lasting protection to them. The impression that it made was not evanescent, but its quality of permanence was of a kind that stimulated the jealousy of the Jesuits. The minds most affected by the Miracle were just those which were most grudged to the Jansenist party, and though it may have secured a period of comparative repose to Port-Royal, its ultimate result was most probably to make the war more than ever deadly.

As we read of that High Mass in the chapel, of the gates of Port-Royal de Paris thronged with the gay world, it is hard to reconcile the picture that the imagination conjures up with the thought of the Mother-Abbess and her gospel of quiet and detachment. She believed as truly as any one of her daughters that God had interposed, but it would seem that she held His intention

* Certificate dated April 14, 1656. See Clemencet, vol. iii. part i. liv. 9.

† Besoigne, "Hist. de Port-Royal," vol. i. liv. 5.

to be the comfort and reassurance of His suffering children, not the amelioration of their ills. "En faisant un grand éclat," said she, characteristically, "on risqueroit de perdre l'humilité." * To her this was a far more serious risk than the loss of credit with the world. It is well, when for once Port-Royal seems to have become a prey to excitement and a species of sensationalism, to find her absolutely unmoved from her habitual point of view. It is at such a moment that we realize the inherent strength of absolute consistency. Whether in spiritual darkness, in outer difficulty, when the admiration of her contemporaries was forced upon her, or when the world was buzzing with praise of the community, always she is the same, perpetually on her guard against all that may disturb the equilibrium of her faith, perpetually seeking the silence upon which the world encroached so ruthlessly, that in the silence the memory of Saint-Cyran might return to her, and she might once more take his motto for her own, and feel that the thought of "God only," as aim and inspiration, was a sufficient defence against the heaviest of dangers.

Even those consecrated minds, schooled as they were to detachment, seem at this moment to have become a prey to reflections on what the world would think. The Miracle of the Sacred Thorn induced a sort of triumph among the nuns of Port-Royal that was utterly unspiritual. And la Mère Angélique saw it, and mourned over it. "Let God act," she exhorted them; "do not force Him to withdraw from us by vain-gloriousness over His works." "All that has happened should tend to guide those that come after us to faith in God, not be made a cause of distraction to us." "In the Name of God let us not talk of this miracle, for instead of inspiring us to a new and deeper and more sacred trust in the Blessed Virgin, it has only been a cause of elation. I am convinced no one has, in consequence of it, been praying to be delivered from their own sinfulness." †

But the effect upon her, at least, of the miracle of the healing of Marguerite Perrier and the cures that afterwards, in the midst

* "Lettres," vol. ii. No. 920.

† See Besoigne, "Hist. de Port-Royal," liv. 5, p. 305.

of the hubbub and exaltation and crowd in the quiet chapel of Port-Royal, were recognized and talked about, was to deepen her conviction that it was in humiliation and disgrace, not in a glow of prosperity, that Christ revealed Himself to the dedicated soul. The miracles did their external work doubtless, and the leaven of delusion did not prevent a deep reality in their suggestiveness to the minds of that generation, but to Angélique (and it may well be to many among her sisters) they had a hidden message. There, at the very end of her long life, with the force of a sudden contrast, the lesson of her whole experience was flashed into a phrase. An unexpected tide of prosperity, sent as it seemed to her by God Himself, brought with it the conviction that prosperity is not among the highest of His gifts; and, as the coaches of the great folk thundered in the street outside, and the quiet garden echoed with the voices that babbled of Divine favour shown towards Port-Royal, of the greatness of its influence, and the certain downfall of its enemies, we can picture la Mère Angélique turning from it all and breathing the words of Ste. Marthe, upon her knees, with a fervour which no hour of endurance could have taught her: "Faites que je préfère, mon Sauveur, à votre exemple, ce qui est méprisable et honteux à toute la gloire du monde." *

* See above, p. 262.

CHAPTER XI

LA MÈRE AGNÈS

It is at such a moment as that of the miracles, and when we regard such intoxication of excitement as resulted from them, that we are reminded that even so dominating a personality as that of Angélique can only be one among many influences required for complete effectiveness, and must be upheld by supports that will not fail at any crisis. She was a leader, but a victorious leader cannot be independent of his subordinates, and Angélique Arnauld in her spiritual victory owed much to the loyalty of such true hearts as her sister Agnès, her niece Angélique d'Andilly, to Isabel Le Feron and Jacqueline Pascal.

With curious persistency, indeed, at every epoch in the history of Port-Royal we are brought back to recollection of Agnès Arnauld, whose individuality no effort after self-effacement could in the least degree obliterate. She shared the dawning life of Angélique, her quiet strength maintained the new tradition of Port-Royal during the period that Maubuisson required the presence of the Abbess; she was foremost in welcome to the new importation of novices; and the most competent of those missionaries of reform who were eagerly claimed from la Mère Angélique by other convents. We have seen her intimate connection (as the writer of "Le Chapelet Secret") with the first persecution, and her vigorous testimony to the reality of the miracles. Nevertheless, though it is impossible to exclude her name if we would give a deliberate and trustworthy recital of those events that touched the fortunes of Port-Royal and of Angélique Arnauld most closely, there is a danger lest she remain a name only, for her qualities

were those that least lend themselves to bald enumeration, and of a kind that do not reveal themselves at the first glance.

Agnès Arnauld was not exempted from the weight of authority, and she bore and wielded it wisely, but it had no charm for her, nor, after her earliest years, did the duty of submission ever trouble her peace of mind. She may be regarded as a type of the religious of Port-Royal (as Angélique, by the nature and conditions of her vocation, certainly may not), and she was taken as a model by many of her sisters whose bent of mind in some measure accorded with her own. There is almost as much of Agnès as of Angélique in the spirit of the nuns under persecution ; that is to say, as much of the imperturbable resignation of the mystic as of the resolute stoicism that comes of deliberate and reasoned self-repression. And their spirit under persecution was but the noblest development of the life of prayer that the presence of Agnès fostered and stimulated. There is a description penned by a lover of Port-Royal, whose nature was susceptible to the impression of the life of the nuns taken as a whole, before their routine had been disturbed by outside interference. It shows us what effect they produced on an emotional temperament, of a type very common in the Gallic races, and is an assistance in an effort to realize their position in the minds of men. Referring to a visit to Port-Royal des Champs, he says : "The all-pervading hush, unbroken save by a song of praise, warned the traveller from afar that the place whereon he walked was holy ground. But Thou alone, O God, Thou alone knowest what Thy Spirit imparts to souls that seek for nothing but Its whispers, and give no obedience save to the suggestions of Its love. In them there is nought but praise of Thee, nothing that does not glorify Thy name. Their voices alone convey the knowledge that their hearts are full of Thy grace, inspiring holy thoughts to their hearers and calling tears to their eyes. Prayer might have its definite and appointed hours, but prayer was incessant rather than interrupted. Truly, O God, Thou hast made this house a House of Prayer." *

* "Première Gémissement d'une Ame vivemont touchée," etc.

This is to some degree the ideal of the sentimentalist, and the religion of Port-Royal was not a sentimental religion. Possibly, indeed, its repudiation of shallow emotionalism was the secret of its effectiveness in an age of affectations. It was said that the impression of austerity in the service in the convent chapel, its darkness, its lack of ornament, its independence of the exterior helps by means of eye and ear which elsewhere were cultivated increasingly, bore more lasting fruit than all the elaborate beauty of music and ritual that the nuns of the Annunciation and the Parisian Carmelites considered fitting. That prayer should be "incessant rather than interrupted" was indeed the ideal of la Mère Angélique, it was the underlying thought when she founded the Order of Adoration, and afterwards incorporated it with her own community. "We should not leave prayer and adoration to our sisters who are actually in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament," she wrote to a nun of the Order, "but, insomuch as by the Grace of God it is possible to us, we should always be there in heart and spirit. If we do otherwise, when our turn comes we shall not be able to fulfil our office." * A very deep sense of the sacredness of that office is implied by the warning, and it is easy to see that indulgence to the senses would not be within the scope of the writer's calculations.

Angélique would, however, have been the first to acknowledge that Agnès realized where she could only exhort. They were both equally humble-minded, but their respective vocations were very different. When Angélique freed herself from office it is with an effort that we realize her, even nominally, as subordinate to others; she was born to rule, and did not cease to do so in the hearts of her companions when she flung the semblance and responsibility of ruling from her. In connection with Agnès, on the other hand, there was a certain incongruity in the idea of regulated state and dignity. It was her habit (a not uncommon practice) to append to her signature the words "réligieuse indigne." It was a true indication of what may be termed her

* "Lettres," vol. i. No. 206.

attitude towards herself, for it is certain that to beings such as la Mère Agnès the sense of unworthiness increases in proportion as the secrets of the Inner Life disclose themselves. "We may well be satisfied to know that we are feeble," she wrote to another nun, "that knowledge is better suited to our state than great resolves that lure us into self-assurance, and so prevent our perpetual appeal to God for pity on our wretchedness. That is the meaning of those words of S. Augustine's which are so dear to me: 'Humility prays but makes no promises, it confesses but makes no protestations.' There is no recognition there of all those efforts and resolves about one's duty towards God that one makes within one's self. We have nothing good of ourselves but what God gives us. Thus, while we pray continually for tokens of His mercy, we must acknowledge continually that we may not claim them. For we are poor and helpless, and may not promise and protest." *

That is the knowledge underlying every thought and word in the life of la Mère Agnès—an overwhelming sense of dependence, of powerlessness independent of the Grace of God. When that sense is combined with the religious vocation it has peculiar force. The self-realization as the chosen of God for special intimacy is incalculably deeper when linked to the self-knowledge that grasps the futility and insufficiency of man apart from God. The vocation that, under the guidance of the Church, meant the three vows and the visible dedication of life, was at once the most terrible and the most glorious lot conceivable to the mind of la Mère Agnès. She did not doubt that she was chosen, but the wonder of her certainty intensified the knowledge of unworthiness. And after sixty years of religious life, she remained still doubtful of her own attainment of the humility required by her vocation. Her reason told her that she was not of a proud spirit, but every year deepened her sense of the peculiar privilege accorded to her, and with every year the thought of any divergence from the absolute self-surrender of the Blessed Virgin dismayed her more.

* "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," vol. ii. No. 307.

The sentence that inevitably suggests itself as a sort of refrain to her recorded thoughts and exhortations is that which must have been so often on her lips: "Domine non sum dignus." It seems to meet us on almost every page of the volumes of her letters, it is the thought from which we never may escape while in her company. Yet as is fitting, it did not dim the keenness of her vision, the clear common sense of her outlook upon life. Her power of directing others was exceptional. Her knowledge of herself gave her intuition as her knowledge of God gave strength, and both gifts stood her in good stead in dealing with those overwrought or ungovernable natures from whose intrusion no community, however protected by a rigorous novitiate, can be entirely exempt.

We enter into a curious intimacy with many an unnamed Sister of Port-Royal by means of the letters of la Mère Agnès, we see one and another kneeling among the shadows in the dark chapel of the parent-house, enduring those periods of spiritual dryness from which none may claim immunity, and losing faith and courage in the trial. If we can realize at all a life that is dedicated to prayer we must acknowledge the awfulness of those moments when all capacity for praying seems to be withheld. At such a period despair is not far distant, the strain of nerve and brain at length becomes physical fatigue, the spirit, "dazed and amazed with overmuch desiring," communicates its weariness to a frame weakened by many fasts, and collapse of mind and body follows. There was in the nature of la Mère Agnès a fibre of severity, of that spiritual stoicism characteristic of the Arnaulds, and assuredly the dismal and reiterated plaints that were poured out to her would have furnished the most placid of Mother-Abbesses or novice-mistresses with justification for impatience; nevertheless, in spite of her natural severity and her possession of the well-balanced mind with which so many of her illustrious race was gifted, she did not become irritated by the irrationality of others, and the distressed souls who had gone astray in the exalted regions of contemplative prayer were tenderly guided and resuscitated if they cried to her for help. She had learnt, indeed, to bear with

her neighbours ("that most precious lesson of the saints," * as François de Sales termed it), and this capacity was due to the great honesty of her religious life, which caused her really to lay aside her own burdens that she might assume those of others. Of her it could be said that "because her sole object was to please her Heavenly Lover she had neither time nor inclination for self-contemplation, for she followed continually whither love led her." † Without doubt the teaching of the gentle saint who wrote those words was much more evident in its effect on her than on la Mère Angélique, though it may be that his work in modifying the natural tendencies of the latter was equally enduring. La Mère Agnès cherished her remembrance of him as the greatest spiritual privilege accorded to her, and carried continually in the bosom of her robe a letter he had written to her, a tender weakness to which her sister would not have yielded.

The characters of the two sisters were essentially—and, considering the similarity of environment, strangely—different, and la Mère Agnès, though she cannot be regarded as a necessary element in the building up of Port-Royal, had a share in it which must not be undervalued. Angélique had a very clear understanding of her debt to the most loyal of her admirers and supporters; the ring of admiration is seldom absent when she refers to her, and the point which is particularly impressive in connection with their mutual relations is the contrast of their respective vocations. Angélique reformed the conditions of religious life, and could not have tolerated them had she been unable to reform them. Agnès would have been a pure-minded and devoted nun had there been no reform, for it is difficult to picture her in any environment but that of the cloister. Here lies the fundamental difference between her and her sister. Each fresh discovery in the character of Angélique deepens our wonder at the force of the conviction that moulded her violent nature to conformity with the straitening of convent life, but the impression of her remains always that of a passionate woman, purified by her

* De Camus, "Esprit de S. François de Sales," ch. xiv.

† Ibid., ch. ii

vocation as by fire, but most human when most stringent in austerity.

With la Mère Agnès it is otherwise. At first sight she is merely a quiet figure gliding to and fro among others more important in the development of drama—pale, fragile, bloodless, without either the strength or the element of hardness that her fellows acquired by self-discipline, because the self in her had claimed so little from the first as to need but little repression. Always we have the sense that in whatever condition of life she had been placed she must have found her way to the security of convent walls eventually, for sordid commonplace temptations could not ruffle her strangely spiritual soul. Yet, because she escaped where others must do battle, it does not follow that she was exempt from the common lot of humanity. The conflicts of a deeply spiritual nature are not less keen because they are hidden from the eyes of others. The temptations that assailed la Mère Agnès were infinitely subtle, yet they demanded constant watchfulness, and for her there was danger in the perpetual self-scrutiny induced by her aspiration towards perfection.

Thus, while we stand amazed before the proofs of the self-control of Angélique, we snatch at every suggestion of human frailty in Agnès with relief, and are better prepared to treasure the gems of spiritual knowledge in her letters by the assurance that she herself was not always aloof from difficulty. Angélique (who fully realized how high a level la Mère Agnès reached when her life developed) does not scruple to reveal the conditions of an earlier time, and once again the two sisters, in their curious relationship to each other, make a picture that enthralls the imagination. For the young Abbess, in that sudden awakening to spiritual realities which reversed her view of outward conditions, became extraordinarily keen of discernment in all points of character in herself or others, and penetrated with unerring vision the veil of sanctity that impressed all who came into touch with Agnès Arnauld the novice.

"She was vain and arrogant," writes the reverend mother, "to a degree one can hardly portray. It was a self-satisfaction

that was in absolute contradiction of all idea of humility or penitence, and to me, who had been so lately converted, it was quite insupportable. Once I said to her—she having asked to be professed—'My sister, you are not yet ready, for if you came too late to the choir or to the refectory I should impose some penance, and you would resent it utterly.' She answered haughtily: 'Then I must avoid being too late for choir or refectory.' She was very particular and fastidious about the elegance and freshness of her dress, but God changed her in all this."

In January, 1611, the Reverend Mother—who was herself only a girl of twenty—gave her the veil. To those in whom her profession excited any interest it must have seemed that the younger sister was but a shadow to the elder, that she would of necessity be controlled and dominated by contact with a character so strong as to be hardly womanlike. Yet, in fact, the influence of Agnès Arnauld is by no means a negligible element in the atmosphere of Port-Royal. Her individuality is very definite, and, as we have seen, it was her mystical aspirations that made the excuse for the first attack upon the community.

And if mysticism is in truth a danger, then Agnès Arnauld was not a trustworthy guide. Even now the thoughts that—couched in well-chosen nervous language—crowd the pages of her letters are apt to take forcible possession of the brain of him who reads, and are hard to reconcile with the maxims of the self-satisfied and practical. To those for whom they were set down therefore, to women who spent their days closely confined within convent walls passing weeks at a time in unbroken silence, whose monotonous routine of duty did not—and was not intended to—bring any distraction of idea, the thoughts of la Mère Agnès may well have been so suggestive as to be completely absorbing. To a nun there must be a peculiar joy in the theory of Quietism in its original purity; as interpreted by la Mère Agnès it is absolutely unsullied, and she never dreams of danger while she can build upon the words of those whom the Church has canonized. Yet had la Mère Agnès dwelt in her old convent of S. Cyr some fifty years later, it can hardly be doubted that she would have had a

share in the sufferings of Mme. Guyon. Every reader of François de Sales may find in him the germ of Quietism, and François de Sales was without question the deepest influence in the life of Agnès Arnauld. If we might follow her, the thought of la Mère Agnès would lead us to those altitudes of the spiritual life where only those who are truly pure of heart may breathe in freedom. The path of the Quietist opens out before us as we seek for the standing-ground from which she aspired, and we find her unconsciously developing the three stages that are familiar to the followers of Jacob Boehme or of Mme. Guyon. Renunciation of the Will, understood as she understood it, was the preparation for the Silence of the Soul. In the generation before the Arnaulds there had been some who were in touch with S. Teresa, and for them these terms might convey a possibility of actual realization. To S. Teresa, at least, the Silence of the Soul was not a phrase; to those who could receive her conception of it, the Claim to Supersensual Life that followed it was no presumption. La Mère Agnès had never heard of Molinos, and the rhapsodies of Mme. Guyon were still in the future. To her those experiences which Jacob Boehme described as supersensual were discoveries, and she was not hampered by a misused phraseology, such as afterwards became a stumbling-block in the way of many whose aspirations may have been of equal purity. And there is, moreover, a peculiar quality in her simplicity, which brings her more within the reach of ordinary humanity than S. Teresa or S. John of the Cross. It is not only that she was not equally illumined. Even if she had been granted such extraordinary spiritual benefits, it is impossible to imagine la Mère Agnès regarding herself as individually set apart from others. It seems as though her own realization of the Presence of God was a never-ending surprise to her, while she believed those around her must possess a knowledge equal to her own, though they elected to conceal it. It is because of her simplicity that she is less baffling to a beginner than S. Teresa. The Spanish saint is no less humble, but her attainment is so amazing, and her scorn of all the human weakness in herself that clogged ascent so fierce, that we turn to the more tolerant

patience of the nun of Port-Royal with a certain measure of relief. The sayings of the latter, moreover, yield more and more meaning as we bestow reflection on them. Her theory of the religious life might bear fruit beyond the cloister, and though its seed is taken from S. Francis, it gains from the thought she grafted on it.

"I do not think it is your good resolutions that will help you," he wrote once to one of his flock, "but the surrender of your resolutions and the complete extinction of your own private methods." "This is inward death," says la Mère Agnès—"death not only to evil but to good. It is death sanctified, the preparation for the life of Jesus Christ, who—to souls that have freed themselves from all that is not of Him—is indeed the Resurrection and the Life."* The words contain the suggestion of paradox that lies so constantly in wait for those who grope amid the obscurities of mysticism. For indeed mysticism is but a barren field for intellectual study, and the "reductio ad absurdum" suggests itself with fatal facility to those who are content to accept the superficial contradictions in many of the statements of the mystics. Therefore it should be realized before the Quietists are approached that their ideal assumes a knowledge that can only be acquired by experience, their very language will not yield its meaning to the most learned of philologists unless his learning be based on a foundation that books alone will not supply. La Mère Agnès, when a great thought possesses her, seems to burn with it so that she cannot pause to explain difficulties of expression, but must plunge forward through the difficulties, assuming—with a confidence that in itself is stimulating—that her listeners will advance with her.

It is strange in this connection to come once more in touch with Arnauld d'Andilly. We have glanced already at the dual existence that he led, and when we remember the environment in which the greater part of his life was spent, he seems oddly chosen as the recipient of his sister's deepest and most subtle self-revelations. We picture him in the guise of the man of

* "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," vol. ii. No. 24.

fashion, with the ripple of wit and the light laughter of the Hôtel Rambouillet still ringing in his ears, holding a sheet that had but just arrived from Port-Royal, and letting its meaning take possession of that receptive brain of his.

"I do assert," wrote la Mère Agnès, as in the fervour of a new discovery, "that there is nothing to be done but to leave one's self to God, to be directed by Him, and if He will not use us, to be ready to remain useless in His presence. It is the uselessness that professes lack of all power, that helplessness which suggests the words of the Son of God—that no man can come unto Him unless His Father draw him. . . . I am sure that God does sometimes make Himself so present to the soul that all else is lost in Him, and that that joy is too absorbing for distraction to be possible. But that prayer is the prayer of God rather than of ourselves, and He gives it only rarely and to individual souls, for He prefers to sanctify us by means of the temptations of the world rather than to free us from them.

"For you and me, my dear brother, I would choose the prayer wherein we yield ourselves to God, rather than that other which imparts more light and consolation; and there is an equal share of suffering in either case if we look to it closely, for to gain further grace the soul must renounce the grace it has received, the further grace to which God draws it, is always more sacred and more mysterious.

"For if we will not renounce that which we know to win the unknown—which, if one may so speak, is God Himself in His Essence and not in His gifts—we are guilty of a sort of idolatry that will involve us in darkness as dense as though we were the prey of perpetual distractions." *

We may wonder if Arnauld d'Andilly realized the full meaning of the letter at the first reading. If he did so he was endowed with a capacity for detachment that was hardly human, for the atmosphere breathed by la Mère Agnès was not that of la Chambre Bleue, still less of the Louvre or the Palais Royal. But if we persevere beyond the initial difficulty of unravelling her

* "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," vol. i. No. 24.

meaning, we find the real simplicity of soul that lay beneath. For to pay her the tribute of reflection is to find that she discovered for herself one of those truths which most wondrously extend our sense of reality in our advance towards knowledge of God. She saw the necessity of deprivation as a means towards progress, that we must fall to rise, be baffled to fight better. There is no harder lesson in the spiritual life; the ground that seemed so firm must crumble, ideals that seemed so satisfying be found hollow, all the scaffolding that imagination helped to build fall from us if we would grope towards the further grace, more sacred, more mysterious, to which it may be the will of God to summon us. Acceptance of this deprivation must proceed from real simplicity—the simplicity that does not prove nor calculate, but surrenders self completely, ready for uselessness and impotence and spiritual dryness should that be God's good pleasure. The renunciation of the known to win the unknown: that is the supreme aspiration of the mystic, and all that it involves can be understood by the mystics only. "It is easier to escape from the world's distractions than from our own glorious dreams," said la Mère Agnès; "and to be filled with the mind of Christ, we must be free from individual aspiration or experience." *

Not many thinkers versed as she was in the systems of spiritual life would have made such an admission as that, yet it may well be that those same glorious dreams have a delusive sweetness far harder to surrender because they seem to satisfy; while the world's distractions stand self-revealed in emptiness at the moment when the need of Christ dawns on the newly awakened soul. Confidence in the experience of the past, whether worldly or spiritual, must be abandoned to rise even in aspiration. In the words of a modern writer, "N'être parfait que dans la mesure ou Dieu nous veut parfait, ne l'être que de la façon et par les moyens qu'il veut, voilà pour nous l'idéal." †

Such, indeed, was the ideal of Agnès Arnauld. "Perfect prayer," said she, "consists in forgetfulness of the fact that we

* "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," vol. i. No. 24.

† Abbé Lejeune, "Théologie Mystique," p. 237.

are praying because our senses are so absorbed by the Spirit of God which prays within us that we are oblivious of the prayer. In the same way I feel that perfect love consists in ceasing to be conscious of love; instead of seeking to draw love from its Source we should aspire to hasten Thither ourselves, to lose ourselves in His immensity rather than risk being lost apart from Him." * "The truly righteous always do what they desire to do, for they have no desires that are not in unison with those of God." †

This is Quietism at its purest, and even in aspiration it was more precious to la Mère Agnès than the breath of sentient life. It was no wonder that she preserved the silence that the Rule advocated very rigidly. Speech had but small temptation for her, seeing that she had unwavering confidence that the whisper that broke upon her in the stillness, came from Christ Himself.

To la Mère Angélique had been given the faculty of organization, of government, of foreseeing that which the welfare of the community required, and preparing for it, but the maintenance of a Rule must have implied self-restraint and to her keen busy brain Office have seemed sometimes an interruption to work for others. To Agnès, on the other hand, employment must have meant interruption. She had loved prayer before she learnt to pray, or rather she loved to kneel in a convent chapel dreaming vaguely of holy things, and the instinct in her was so marked and so recognized that Angélique, when both were growing old, refers to it with a suggestion of laughter. "She was so fond of her place in choir," she writes, recalling early days, "that one day, to mortify her, I removed her from it. It is forty years ago and more, and she was a novice then, and cried abominably. And lately, when we were in Paris together, I said to her: 'Our old original dispositions last, ma mère, be sure of that! Do you remember how I caused you to be brought away from the choir in floods of tears, forty years ago, because Office was the only thing you cared for. I am certain that if I forbade you to be present on special occasions you would cry now just as you did then. We are never cured of our old weaknesses!'"

* "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," vol. i. No. 34. † Ibid., No. 228.

Agnes did not need her sister's unflinching criticism, however, to reveal to her her faults; she could find in herself the indications of weakness, which must assuredly have been invisible to other eyes. "It seems to me that I need to pray much to God," she wrote at the beginning of Lent, in 1643, "but it should be briefly and frequently. To apply myself to prayer is my sole difficulty; I can continue without effort. I humbly request you to let me take a quarter of an hour at three separate times besides the regular prayers of the Community. I greatly need to watch myself touching my duty to my neighbour, whom I injure constantly by sharp replies. Our Lord spoke more gently to Satan than I do to our sisters. I could wish that you would let me accuse myself of this before the Chapter as being an inveterate fault that has been repeated for thirty years." *

The writer had then had nearly fifty years' experience of herself, and from the first moment that she could choose for herself she seems to have always chosen the way of self-renunciation; to others, moreover, her record appeared to be that of a saint, yet she can write to the sister who was only a year her senior with the humility of a wayward novice in a fit of penitence. Truly the vehemence of her self-condemnation would have justified greater exactions from others than were ever made by her, yet—"Perfection is not required of a nun," said she, "but only the perpetual desire to attain to it." † The spirit of la Mère Agnès is in that utterance, the depth, the naiveté, and the peculiar quality of common sense. But in her view the life of the religious meant privilege, not sacrifice; her absolutely pure conception of it made her unsparing towards any wavering, for to her, in her years of silence, had been granted glimpses of the Vision of Perfection, and her dazzled eyes could not see that the world could have attractions.

Her intercourse with her nephew, Antoine Le Maistre, and the part she took in his extraordinary renunciation, is a notable instance of this. She shared with his other kinswomen in the

* "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," vol. i. No. 62.
† Ibid., No. 150.

earnest desire that he should disappoint the hopes of his worldly well-wishers, and fling aside his prospects; their earnestness, indeed, is a proof that the stringent rule of S. Benedict does little to weaken the ties of blood. But la Mère Agnès had, it is evident, a very definite affinity to her nephew, the brilliant lawyer. By the sequel to his triumphs, it was shown that there was no cause for wonder in this, but while his ears were ringing with the applause of Paris, the link between him in the glow of young ambition and the cloistered nun in her exaggerated humility, is not self-evident. Their union of affection was rooted in the strong faith of la Mère Agnès. So earnest was her prayer for him that she was confident of its eventual fulfilment; but there is a humorous side to the condition of horror and incredulity into which she was plunged when he wrote to her to announce his approaching marriage. Nothing could be more characteristic of the attitude of these nuns of Port-Royal towards conventional standards. Antoine Le Maistre had evidently written with innocent fervour to his aunt; he had made his choice discreetly, and by all ordinary standards the announcement was one to rejoice the hearts of all who loved him. But la Mère Agnès received it otherwise. Beginning her reply as was her custom, "My very dear nephew," she observes that she does so for the last time; in future she can only love him as she might love any one else, in a general spirit of charity. He cannot expect to remain as a king in her heart when he is voluntarily turning himself into a slave. There can be no sympathy between light and darkness, between God and Mammon.*

This uncompromising reception of his confidences does not seem to have aroused any indignation in the young lover. Probably his keen wit realized and respected the essential consistency of his kinswoman's view, and when his projected marriage came to nothing, the memory of her reproaches and regrets may have prepared the way for the more violent influence that was to turn the course of his career. Even while dreams of the world's triumphs were still appearing to engross him, he was curiously

* "Lettres de la Mère Agnes," vol. i. No. 23.

susceptible to the suggestion of vocation. There was in him none of that resentment against standards that set at a discount the prizes that he fought for, which is a natural sentiment in ambitious youth. The struggle which Agnès would have viewed as being between light and darkness, which was, in fact, between the pride of life (so hard to separate from great intellectual gifts) and the endeavour for the extinction of self-love involved by a deep realization of the claim of Christ, had begun in the soul of Antoine Le Maistre long before he understood its meaning. Even in his lightest moments the most fascinating of the précieuses in Court or city could not extort from him a tithe of the admiration which prompted every word that had reference to a Port-Royal nun. What may be termed the abstract theory of vocation, already claimed his reverent interest when any practical interpretation of it in his own case was still far from his vision of the future. When he made any reference to it, the chronic discontent of the ambitious suggested a note of wistful longing, and to la Mère Agnès he certainly gave ample justification for the hopes she cherished concerning him. "I should be astonished if you spoke with less enthusiasm of the life you have chosen," he wrote to her, evidently replying to one of her periodical exhortations, "it is the nearest to that of the angels. While the matrons people the world the virgins are peopling Heaven. And, moreover, it would show a lack of charity not to desire the holiest and most perfect condition for one's neighbour. Seeing that the wicked draw others into vice, and the married into matrimony, should we not permit those who have renounced the world to encourage others to imitate them and to share their true felicity and depth of joy? May it please God, my dear aunt, that your counsels may be as faithful as they are wise, and that I may become the child of your vows and prayers as S. Augustine was of the tears of S. Monica. May it please God that the voice of the Master which can check the flames of fire will extinguish those which consume us, and that it may sever the bonds I cannot break. How gladly would I offer a sacrifice of praise! How joyful should I be to build up Divine love on the ruins of self-love!

But who can rear the heavenly seed that you sow in ground that is full of tares? And what hand save that of God can destroy such deep-rooted thorns? But do not forget that there are diversities of vocation, and that all are holy when they come from God." *

We must remember that the tidings of the young lawyer's retirement fell on his world with the shock of a surprise, yet it was three years earlier, while he was in the midst of the excitement of his triumphs, that such words as these were written and despatched to Port-Royal, betraying, even by reason of their hesitation, that his restlessness and discontent was deep-seated and already threatening to become incurable save by a remedy he dared not face.

Saint-Cyran's enemies had made him responsible in one instance for the work of Agnès Arnauld. It had been only by elaborate proofs that she was able to establish his innocence respecting her "Chapelet Secret." It is possible that he suffered a second time on her behalf when the retirement of Le Maistre brought down on him the wrath of Richelieu. We cannot estimate to gauge the full strength of a quiet lifelong influence such as hers upon her nephew. He, while he recognized to the full whose Hand it was that gave the increase, seems, in the energy of his gratitude to Saint-Cyran, to have lost sight of that other human agency, which from his boyhood had borne its steady and unchanging part in his development. But whether or no she received her meed of recognition, we may rest assured that la Mère Agnès was content, and henceforth addressed the child of her prayers and vows as her "very dear nephew."

Others might feel regret at the necessity of complete and unconditional self-surrender which forced Le Maistre to let his gifts lie fallow. This necessity was, however, to la Mère Agnès, the most elementary of truths, and her method of expounding it is characteristic in its simplicity of conviction. "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out"—that was her rule for all who, even

* Dated June, 1634. Quoted by Clemencet, "Hist. de Port-Royal," part i. liv. 5.

faintly, shared in her aspirations, and such injunctions almost ceased to be figurative. "The pleasure that we take in outward things weakens the life of grace," she wrote; "you have a type of this, my sister, in the fact that you pray with greater fervour in our dark choir (of Port-Royal des Champs) than in the brighter one in Paris. It is a rule in all things that the more the senses lose the more the spirit gains, though it is the fashion among the nominally religious to say nowadays that the one does not hinder the other, and that one may give one's self to God, and yet enjoy a thousand indulgences apart from Him. Possibly what one calls innocent pleasures do not banish the grace of God, but they do weaken our sense of it. Our Lord said: 'He that loveth his life must lose it,' which means we must lose outward things to win inward, we must renounce that which is of the world for that which is of heaven." * "If we would make a sure advance we must gradually renounce all enjoyment that gratifies the senses, so that we do not even care for them when they are offered to us. Then when our Lord sees that we have given up these things, He will give us consolation in Himself, even as the Blessed Virgin says in the Magnificat: 'He filleth the hungry with good things.' This is the fast that we must keep, my sister, not only from Ash Wednesday to Easter, but from Easter to Ash Wednesday." †

Thus implacable severity is oddly blended with the gentleness innate in Agnès Arnauld, for such words from her were not mere phrases, but the expression of a rule of life. Yet her idea of discipline was the best proof of her love for her sisters. The life of the religious is not one of half-measures; the attempt to make it so had given birth to its abuses and its miseries, and must inevitably, and at all times, bring it into contempt. In the eyes of la Mère Agnès the rule that was a chain was not a religious rule. To her, death to the world meant resurrection in the life of Christ, but such a death demanded the annihilation of self-love and the paying of the price with joy. The dates of

* "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," vol. i. No. 89 (to Isabel Le Féron).

† Ibid., No. 216.

her letters show that they were scattered through a long period of years, almost a life-time, and it is possible to trace the development of thought, to see how her watchfulness over herself and others grew deeper and more searching as the clouds gathered about Port-Royal, and her own life drew near its close. If there were waverers within the convent walls, her splendid certainty of the ineffable blessedness of the religious life must have infused new courage into their fainting hearts. Her arguments were always ready, for they were the reason of her being, and if there were flaws in them, the fortunate recipient of a letter from her was not likely to detect it. Nor is the inspiring quality of her sympathy ever more evident than in her letters to her sisters when the moment of their profession was at hand, and by reason of her skill in projecting herself into the condition of her correspondent, we get from her the most vivid impression of the standpoint wherefrom a nun of Port-Royal regarded the future; and can form some conception of the theory of their offering, in the eyes of the world so exaggerated in its completeness, in their own so little worthy of acceptance.

"My sister, you wish to give yourself to God," she wrote once, on the eve of a profession; "one must needs possess something or one cannot give; to give to God it would seem that one must needs have wealth, and yet to do so in a manner pleasing to Him we should know our own utter poverty. Therefore before your act of offering, the Church requires you to ask for God's mercy. Not for the grace of God, but for His mercy, to impress upon you the condition of wretchedness to which we are reduced by sin. If we were innocent we should of necessity yield ourselves to God, for we should be in a natural state of grace. Having fallen from that state, it is a special mercy when God deigns to accept our gift of ourselves.

"Notice also, my sister, that it is not for your own individual sins that you ask His mercy, or to obtain any special grace, but simply that you may be permitted to take the vow of your profession. This indicates the disinterestedness, the purity of motive with which you must make the act, letting it be your sole purpose

to consecrate yourself to God, to devote yourself, to bind yourself to His service as closely as is possible, by renouncing all future power of choice.

"You desire to unite yourself to God by the three capacities of your being, given to you by God for that purpose, and because sin has corrupted and distorted them, you intend to reform them by the three vows. Memory—which preserves in us the thought of earthly things—is purified by Poverty, for by deprivation of earthly treasures it may be concentrated on desire of the fulness of the grace of Jesus Christ, the heritage of those who renounce earthly riches. Understanding is purified of the shadows and misconceptions which hinder its knowledge of the Truth, by Obedience, the pledge of unfailing light to those who accept it. Will is so reformed and purified that it inclines only towards the Sovereign Good by the vow of Chastity which forbids love of creatures, that we may give our whole love in absolute devotion to Him Whom you take to-day for Spouse. Give back to Him, then, my sister, these three gifts which He gave you Himself; and do it unreservedly, that that which God began in you may be perfected to His glory and to your salvation." *

To those who permit themselves to picture sensational possibilities in a nun's profession, the calm directness of la Mère Agnès is enlightening. Her gaze is so riveted on the prize of her high calling that she has no leisure to throw a backward glance. She could not see that the world could have attraction for one who had the faintest glimpse of the knowledge of God. "God is only really God to those who surrender the disposal of their being completely to Him," she cries; "only by their nothingness do they become the objects of His Divine power." † "We must go forward without weighing what we do. It is for Christ—the second Adam—to give the true name to all things. He sees our work. He only can determine its true value. We must leave judgment to Him that we may lean only on Him,

* "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," vol. ii. No. 109 (to a novice at Port-Royal).
† Ibid., No. 48.

doing what we believe He directs, and when we have done it, leaving the rest to Him without further anxiety." *

It would seem that no secret hiding-place of self-love can possibly be concealed from her searching scrutiny; as in the Book of Genesis man is represented as being created from nothing, so, by her doctrine, the re-birth of spiritual life can only come from an absolute void of personal desire. Such regeneration was unattainable under the present conditions of human life, and she knew it, but the knowledge was no check on her aspirations. The secret of her unwavering enthusiasm—preserved in face of difficulties and disappointments and in unity with the clear-eyed good sense which revealed to her the flaw in much that simpler souls could accept unchallenged—lay in her capacity for hope. Logically loss of hope implies loss of faith in the Catholic, but there are conditions of spiritual despondency that should be exempted from ordinary criticism, and the life led within the walls of Port-Royal did sometimes foster the seeds of hopelessness, in those who found that temptation had only changed in character without weakening in vigour, when re-encountered after the world had been left behind. La Mère Agnès, however, had the faith so inseparably linked with every instinct of mind and heart that penitence itself meant stimulus. The great possession of Catholic belief in the Blessed Sacrament was hers in a measure which serves to show the weakness and fainthearted-ness of others by force of contrast. It is impossible to attempt to judge fairly of her expressions of opinion unless we can approach them from her standpoint, and the atmosphere she breathed was too rarefied for ordinary humanity.

When the Institute of the Blessed Sacrament was established, it seemed as if Agnès Arnauld was destined to find a special fulfilment of her individual desires. Sebastien Zamet chose her as one of the four most likely to profit by a sojourn at Tard, and the old tradition of her childhood that recognized her delight in prayer, indicated her vocation for the life of peculiar sanctity to which the new Order was consecrated. No living soul—either nun or

* "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," vol. ii. No. 27.

priest—had a deeper realization of the Treasure entrusted to the Church, and her keenness of resentment was as great towards those who were careless and unmindful of it as towards the heretics themselves. She did not require the motive of reparation which was supposed to inspire her sisters, for her whole being was instinctively concentrated in adoration, her conception of the Divine Reality of the mystery made any other attitude impossible.

"Je regarde ce mystère comme une chose à laquelle je dois mon être par anéantissement et non par application;" * that was her own summary of her view of the Blessed Sacrament. It was a mental attitude which once more suggests the thought of Quietism, but which, when thus considered in relation to one special point of Catholic belief, is perhaps more difficult of comprehension than in its usual vague application to the whole sum of religious thought. It is well that all mysticism—and especially that form which is termed Quietism—should be such fruitful ground for cavillers and critics, for mysticism, unless absolutely pure, is infinitely dangerous, and the furnace of scorn and mockery is needed to eliminate the dross. But when the censors—recognized and self-constituted—have done their worst, the true ideal of the mystic remains untouched, not a whit less veritable because uncomprehended. It is in the study of lives such as that of la Mère Agnès that we catch a glimpse of its deep reality. It requires some sojourn in the wilderness to prepare a human soul for the conditions which she coveted, to which it may be thought that she attained; but we have seen enough of the Convent of Port-Royal to concede that its inhabitants had at least the intention of renunciation, and la Mère Agnès from the first accepted deprivation gladly, and therefore lost none of its fruitfulness.

"The will must die to be absorbed in that of God," she wrote to Jacqueline Pascal (reiterating an idea that was ever present with her)—"after that the Resurrection." † So, in the gradual extirpation of desire she fitted herself to offer her tribute of adoration. She did not seek or welcome publicity. She was

* "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," Int. (ed. 1858). † Ibid., vol. i. No. 130.

no self-chosen prophetess with a message of enlightenment for others, there is no link of likeness between Mme. Guyon and la Mere Agnès, nor did she respond to any call such as had summoned Angélique to the reform of evident abuses. For her her self-consecration was enough; the Master had called and she had answered; further, it was only needful that she should fulfil in absolute humility such offices of service as He might day by day assign to her.

Jansenius, when he described her as "ennivrée de l'amour de Dieu," indicates that peculiar exaltation that was at once her weakness and her source of power, distracting to herself, but impressive when intimately realized by others because of the fundamental honesty and reality in her that removed her from the level of the visionary. But to herself it seemed that her vocation was to the work of the hidden life, and it was a strange anomaly in the course of destiny that made her teaching the original cause of accusation against Port-Royal, and the expression of her thought the theme of controversy. The ideas that "Le Chapelet Secret" enfolds present many difficulties (partly by reason of the manner of their expression), and its best defence is a reference to the plainly stated opinion of the writer: "These thoughts ought not to be imparted to others lest they might be misinterpreted." *

Misinterpretation involved, as she foresaw, the suggestion that she was attempting to erect a barrier betwixt the human soul and the means of grace, and this was to her a most terrible accusation. "Receive Jesus Christ in love, and you will find yourself bound to do right"—that was her simple creed. "How can one fail to yield one's self entirely to the Saviour who has given us all He could give us in giving us Himself?" †

In admitting the obscurities of "Le Chapelet Secret" we must remember that the writer intended her readers should be few, and assumed in them a knowledge and experience equal to her own. The momentary glimpse of her real self that comes to us in the perusal of her letters, of her profundity of thought and meditation,

* "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," vol. i. No. 157.
† Ibid., vol. ii. No. 74.

and the absolute security of her faith, removes her above the range of ordinary criticism. Others might disturb themselves over the eternal problem of predestination and grace, and fanatics lose their reason in the uncertainty of their own election, but Agnès Arnauld—although eternity was a more present thought to her than time—could not see that a conscious certainty of salvation was essential. "It seems to me," she said, "that it does not matter whether we know that we have Grace in us, so long as all is as is most pleasing to God, either visibly or in secret; but whether Grace be in ourselves, or outside ourselves, all that we need is to yield to it. I say outside ourselves, because it seems to me that our innermost soul where Grace is sometimes hidden, is not ourselves, because its depths are dark to us, and we know not how to sound them, and it is there that God dwells. And God has surrounded Himself with darkness—a darkness that elsewhere is called impenetrable radiance; and therefore without knowledge, and even in spite of knowledge, we are called to worship God hidden in the profundity of our soul, and to endure our ignorance and all the pain that it involves by giving ourselves to Him." *

That is the language of mysticism, but the mysticism of la Mère Agnès often echoes or gives form to a sub-conscious self-knowledge that is common enough. She was not out of touch with the world of breathing men and women to the same degree as were many of the mediæval saints, and the same truths which the sharp experience of life will unveil to others for a moment, grew plain to her in hours of meditation. Beyond the reach of will or memory, or even of self-consciousness, there is a chamber of the human soul wherein perhaps the very mystery of being is hidden. Many may go to their graves without a thought of its existence—to them neither pain nor joy has been accorded in its essence; but others at some moment of their lives have felt the shaft of destiny pierce through the strata of convention, of experience, of self-development, and touch something hitherto unknown; revealing, with the shock of complete newness, that in the innermost depths of a man's soul is a power which can be

* "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," vol. ii. No. 41.

obscured, but which his most ardent efforts cannot alter; a self within himself, a self that is far more real than that changeful, confusing entity which he cherishes continually but never understands.

It was by the knowledge that came to her in silence that la Mère Agnès learnt to speak to others. In silent communing God gave her understanding of the blindness which weakens the efforts even of those who aspire highly. Spiritual advance demands so much more than fulfilment of duty and the practice of self-denial. It is so easy to be letter-perfect and to miss the sense, and la Mère Agnès, knowing the sterile dreariness of the one without the other, was very searching in her criticism, bringing her insight into human nature to bear upon her sisters in religion somewhat unsparingly. "It is not enough that we hope for a good result from the thing we desire, but we must try and see if there is a good reason for it. This will not be unless God prompted it. Every desire, my dear sister, which we are conscious did not come straight from God, is a desire of the flesh, even though its object may seem to be the good of the soul. A test of this type of desire is that we shall find ourselves trying to hide it from a director, conscious that its imperfection will be recognized; another test is that we cannot rest till it is accomplished, while pure desires bring rest and submission to the Will of Him who inspired them." *

It must have been very difficult to conceal a carefully treasured weakness from that scrutiny. Perhaps the system of direction has never before or since been so closely and carefully applied as within the convent walls of Port-Royal. In considering the religious vocation as exemplified there, we shall see the degree to which nuns as well as novices were required to subject themselves to their Mother-Superior, and under la Mère Agnès a practice that in many instances must have been enervating, tended to give vigour and balance to the overstrained, and instil simplicity in the place of exaggeration. False religious excitement was as intolerable to her as to Angélique. The spirit of penitence was in the

* "Lettres de la Mère Agnes," vol. i. No. 77.

very air of Port-Royal, but no excess in its expression was permitted. "Be careful to add nothing to the thoughts of penitence that God suggests to you," she wrote to a nun; "affectation slips into everything—it may seem to follow the Divine suggestion while it exaggerates it. There is nothing sure but inward silence and the simplicity which implies detachment from our own spiritual developments, so that we are content to let them go unexpressed. What we speak or write of them should be the inspiration of the moment, not the record of a remembered impression." *

It is impossible not to recognize the deep practical wisdom of this exhortation. The life of a nun differs from any other life, but la Mère Agnes had been a nun from her childhood, and it is remarkable that she should have recognized so clearly the subtle dangers that are attendant even on its defences. She confronts morbidness at times with even a touch of humour, and humour, it must be acknowledged, was so little cultivated at Port-Royal that a faint suggestion of it is a welcome novelty. She refuses to take the despairing self-accusations of nuns who cannot keep awake during office at all seriously. Their physical force had not sufficed to control their weariness, and therefore they slept. It might be a little humiliating, even a little absurd, but it was not a sin.† Even to her own failings she can apply her store of common sense (a task more difficult when such close introspection was the rule); she realized that her thoughts were apt to wander in prayer, and accepted it as part of the weaknesses of the flesh; her spiritual energy seems, indeed, to have been so concentrated in her deep desire for advance that she had no leisure for such regrets as her judgment told her would be fruitless.

In her to the end of her life we find the spirit of de Sales far more than that of Saint-Cyran. If we grow familiar with the latter by means of his letters (the surest path to intimacy with an honest man), we find his depth of sympathy and gentleness and love, but to find it we must seek it. The corruption that had

* "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," vol. ii. No. 58.

† Ibid., vol. i. No. 126.

spread among the lives of men was the most present thought with him; he saw no cure but cautery, and the present necessity for the remedy taught him indifference to the pain it would involve. It is no wonder that his personality, as we conceive of it, is harsh and rugged, completely different from that of de Sales. But it is the motive that runs through all the teaching of the gentle Saint, "Tout par l'amour rien par force," * that finds its reflection, its embodiment, in Agnès Arnauld, while it is very rarely that a word of hers reminds us that the influence of Saint-Cyran had ever touched her. In the life of de Sales, moreover, there was a constant testimony to his special devotion to the Blessed Virgin, this influence is lacking in the life of Saint-Cyran, and faint in that of Angélique, but Agnès was never free from it. She did not make it a definite aim to testify to the efficacy of this influence, her concentrated soul seems never to have been distracted by side issues, but out of her adoring love had sprung the conception of a holy personality of which she herself was dimly and unconsciously the shadow and reflection.

In that theory of quiescence with which all her deepest teaching was impregnated is the spirit of the Mother of Sorrows as she appeared in the ages of violence and persecution. "God may require but little outward service of us," wrote Agnès to another nun; "we may see this in the Blessed Virgin, who remained as a child before Him. He did not will that she should display any of the wondrous grace she had received either in teaching or reproving others; all her virtue was to consist in being *hidden* in God." † "She should be the model of souls who ask of God only His secret whispers, who taste that *hidden manna which is unknown save to those who may receive it.*" ‡

Agnès in face of suffering bore herself very differently from Angélique. In the strong nature of the elder there was a lust of pain that all she was called upon to suffer could never satisfy. Agnès had no such consciousness of the necessity of individual

* De Camus, "Esprit de S. François de Sales."
† "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," vol. i. No. 122.
‡ Ibid., vol. ii. No. 440.

chastening. She could accept with the same resignation as her sister, but not without trembling. "All that we have to do," she said, when disaster was close upon them, "is to leave ourselves in the hands of God, and to pray as we should in a great thunderstorm." *

It is in such chance sayings that la Mère Agnès is most self-revealing. She was not a mediæval martyr covetous of anguish that should commemorate the agony of Calvary, she was naturally timorous and fearful of unknown forces, her humility forbade the thought of choosing suffering for herself, and would hardly permit her to look for an example in the Mother of Sorrows. "Our pains have no comparison with hers," she wrote, when her life was at its darkest, "yet, if I dared to say it, they are greater because we are so utterly inferior in virtue to the Blessed Mother, who can never have failed in complete submission to the Will of God, Who gave her as great a share in the Passion of her Son as was possible for a creature. I do not doubt that at the foot of the Cross she said, 'Behold the hand-maid of the Lord, be it unto me according to Thy word!' and did not say it with less self-surrender than when she was awaiting the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, being conscious from that moment that, when she became the Mother of God, she became also the mother of the Crucified." †

In such thoughts, in such contemplation as this, in half-realized aspirations towards unity of soul with the Mother of Sorrows and of comfort—Notre Dame de Consolation—Agnès Arnauld lived her life in perpetual readiness for death. And every detail of it as she lived it, made clear to others her own realization of the claim, that the religious acknowledges when from her heart she echoes the wondrous answer to the Call of God, "Ecce ancilla Domini." For this reason, among all those who, during a century, dwelt at Port-Royal, there is no more perfect type of the consecrated soul than la Mère Agnès.

* "Lettres de le Mère Agnès," vol. i. No. 279.
† Ibid., No. 270.

CHAPTER XII

PORT-ROYAL AND THE WORLD

It is only with the philosophy that is born of detachment that we can resign ourselves to turn from the society of la Mère Agnès to contemplate that world of turbulent human nature which could not, even in the silence of Port-Royal, be forgotten or ignored. For the chief importance of the miracles was undoubtedly their effect upon the world, and that effect was immediate and sensational. For this reason there is a danger of according to them an undue prominence. To us it seems that the fact of Port-Royal, of the lives lived within the convent walls and in the dwellings of the hermits, is a clearer proof of the Divine blessing than the nine-days' wonder of the healing of Marguerite Perier. Saint-Cyran and la Mère Angélique were the means of exorcising spiritual ills far greater than that with which the little pensionnaire was afflicted, and the effectiveness of Port-Royal was too great to be permanently augmented or disturbed by the excitement of a sensational event.

The hold that Angélique alone had acquired on society is in itself a sufficient explanation of the wrath of the Jesuits. The scope of her hold grows evident as we read her letters and those of Agnès. She was in the closest intimacy with many of the Court (as we have seen already), and the ladies of the Court had immense influence; she was also on terms of real friendship with the Queen of Poland,* a lady of whom we obtain strangely varying impressions from the many persons who elected to criticize her, but who was probably what Angélique conceived

* Marie Louise, eldest daughter of Charles de Gonzagues, Duc de Nevers. Married, 1645, Sigismond Ladislas IV., King of Poland.

her to be, a woman subject to vanity, led astray by ambition, often deceiving herself as to her motives, yet in essentials actuated by high aims, and a real desire to practise the Catholic faith, of which she spoke and wrote so much. But, though the Queen may have possessed many admirable qualities, it is impossible to evade the sense that her fidelity was largely due to the indefatigable efforts of Angélique. And mingled with many phrases of respect claimed by her great condition, there is more than a suggestion of plain speaking among the letters of the Mother-Abbess to the Queen. Always disinterested, Angélique is never more definite in independence than in this connection. Even at a moment of great distress she demurred at the bounty of the Queen on the plea that her duty to her own subjects required her to supply their needs first.† The bonds that permitted such rebuffs needed to be strongly riveted, and Angélique and Marie de Gonzagues present an admirable instance of the influence of the religious over her sister in the world.

There is a certain breeziness about the methods of the Mother-Abbess with those who, as she rightly gauged, were not able to face the sharper ordinance imposed on dedicated souls. If tact and patience could have defended Mme. de Guemenée from the machinations of de Retz, she would not have severed her links with Port-Royal, but for her the powers of evil were too strong. Marie de Gonzagues was of more promising material, and she was the means of preserving to the world one aspect of the strong individuality of her friend and mentor, which without her might have been obscured amid the records of religious experience, of conventual difficulties, and outward persecutions.

La Mère Angélique wrote to her friend in the world about the affairs of the world, and thus we glean some knowledge of her point of view towards the events that were taking place around her.† The previous experience of Marie de Gonzagues

* "Lettres," vol. ii. No. 552 (1653).

† It is believed that the actual preservation of the letters is due to la Mère Agnès, who copied them when given to her for despatch.

when she approached Port-Royal, did not rival those of the heroines of the Fronde, who afterwards sought refuge there, nor had she shared in the license claimed by Mme. de Guemenée, but she was not untainted by the influence of the time; she had loved a man whom she could not wed, and regarded his violent death * as the greatest calamity that could befall her. It was in her grief at this bereavement that her thoughts turned to the rumours of Saint-Cyran's influence. It does not seem that the consolations generally offered by Saint-Cyran were of a kind likely to be of assistance to a soul stricken as was hers, nor that he would regard such an illegitimate cause of suffering as a stable foundation for real conversion. But Marie de Gonzagues was not destined to come into connection with Saint-Cyran. She approached la Mère Angélique, it is true, with that intent, and her sentiments on the points of controversy with which the name of Saint-Cyran was involved, were such as to satisfy his adherents, but she came too late; he died before their interview could be arranged, and it was the part of Angélique herself to assist her to reconstruct her view of her own life and of the world.

She was permitted to stay for a few days at a time in the convent, a privilege the Mother-Abbess very rarely extended, for her own instincts and Saint-Cyran's warnings had imbued her with the fear of permitting the world to encroach upon the cloister, as it had done so repeatedly in other communities to the destruction of the spirit of religious life.† But the Princess accepted the conventual discipline with peculiar simplicity; she came almost every week to the Convent parlour, and established an intimacy with Angélique which no after-separation had power to destroy. Had she been flattered or tenderly treated, it is unlikely that the influence would have been more than passing; but the Mother-Abbess was obdurate in her resolve that all who came to Port-Royal must conform to its spirit, and refused to

* Cinq-Mars, the favourite of Louis XIII., known as M. le Grand. Beheaded at Lyons in 1642 by order of Cardinal Richelieu.

† See "Entretiens," No. 15.

permit conversation between outsiders who met within its walls. "If they talk they will talk of the world," said she; "they come to Port-Royal to learn another language." * Therefore, at the outset Princess Marie had to convince herself that her motive in going to the convent was a desire for a worthier life, and not a love of novelty.

Here, as in many other instances, it is difficult to say to what degree the personal attraction of Angélique was responsible for the fidelity of her correspondents. But the question is not one that would have troubled her, for she always regarded her whole influence as God-given in equal measure with any other means of grace, and all the words she spoke or wrote that were effectual as being prompted by the Spirit of God. It was in such practical applications of generally accepted truths that she cut many a knot of difficulty, and repelled those accusations of undue personal dominance which dog the steps of all who raise the standards of faith and of the practice that belongs to faith, within the dominions of convention. The record of history proves, moreover, that she did not control the actual conduct of the Princess. If Angélique Arnauld had directed events Marie de Gonzagues would never have been Queen of Poland, much less when she became a widow would she have demanded the Church's sanction to put its laws aside and marry her husband's brother and successor. But though she defied the theories of Port-Royal in twice assuming the crown of Poland, she was never alienated from the friendship and sympathy of Angélique, of whose letters to her about two hundred have been preserved. As a record of the affairs of Port-Royal and of France, these letters are of infinite value, but they possess an even deeper interest in connection with Angélique herself, for in themselves they are evidence of her conception of the responsibility of friendship. She made the anxieties and sorrows of her correspondent her own, the successive deaths of the royal children, the miseries of the Polish people, the temptations that assailed the Queen herself, are all treated with greater feeling than if they affected her personal conditions.

* Besoigne, "Hist. de Port-Royal," part i. liv. 2.

And it was probably from her suggestions that the Queen found courage to preserve the practice of religion she had adopted before her marriage. At one period, for instance, we find as lady-in-waiting at the Polish Court, a girl who was already a nun of Port-Royal in all but the outward marks.* It was with the help of la Mère Angélique also that a convent of French nuns—Les Filles de S. Marie, maintaining their Rule in its rigidity—was established at Warsaw, and at all times the Queen seems to have maintained an attitude of mind that was sufficiently spiritual to make the exhortations and remonstrances and reflections of her correspondent both apt and welcome.

Angélique realized to the full, however, that when she wrote to the Queen she was touching the world. Probably she knew herself to be susceptible to the influence of rank. In the age and country to which she belongs, it would argue a species of detachment which she never claimed, had she been impervious to class distinctions. Their force then was greatly in excess of any tradition which the most conservative have preserved in more recent times, and even the mind that could honestly despise the riches of this world was seldom altogether regardless of its glory. It required an effort for the Mother-Abbess to write with absolute sincerity to a woman who was cousin to Louis XIV. and the wife of a reigning king, and she was conscious that it was so. Yet in one of the discussions recorded by Antoine Le Maistre,† Angélique expressed herself with great candour on this subject of the Queen. She told him that she had always exhorted her to be royal in her charities, and not to save money. The Queen was by other friends cautioned against a generosity that paid no heed to the future, but she answered them that she did not wish to amass riches, for however little she had, if she became a widow she did not doubt that she would always have enough to be received by la Mère Angélique at Port-Royal des Champs. She wrote this reply to Angélique herself, and Le Maistre, considerably impressed by the idea, observed that nothing was more

* "Lettres," vol. ii. No. 712.
† "Entretiens," No. 34.

valuable as a tribute to Christianity than the submission of the great and powerful to the yoke of Christ,* and that it would give him real delight to see the Queen receive the Habit at the hands of la Mère Angélique.

Angélique's deeper penetration makes itself felt in her reply. She said that she did not think it was to be desired that her Majesty should be a nun, for unless a Queen was absolutely saintly, she was almost certain to be the cause of weakness and laxity in a religious house. Royal ladies were naturally delicate and fastidious, and there was no special ground to expect a miracle in her case. In the sight of God Kings and Queens were nothing, the vanity of their position was a cause of alienation, not a claim upon His love. They were born children of wrath twice over; there was hardly one Princess in whom the Spirit and the Grace of God was evident. It is not easy, indeed, to picture a Queen in the novitiate at Port-Royal; it would have been necessary for the one to have changed her nature, or the conditions of the other to have been distorted out of recognition; and even if a miracle had effected the first, there is something in the thought that is antagonistic to the simplicity of that particular community. Angélique and her daughters might pray for repentant Queens, but such illustrious persons would find a fitter refuge with the Carmelites; the monotony of S. Bernard and S. Benedict could not brook such a disturbing element. We know how continual was the self-accusation of the Mother-Abbess on the score of pride, and it may be permitted to recognize some ground for it (often so hard to find) in this connection. "The Queen received my letters with delight," Angélique told Le Maistre, "and M. de Fleuri, her confessor, writes that all her household are overjoyed when she receives them, because afterwards they see that she is more gentle to them, less exacting and critical, that she forgives their failings towards her, that she is more dévôte and more self-restrained. It is the knowledge of the fruit which God gives from my letters

* The reminiscence of N. Fontaine is of interest in this connection: "Le Maistre m'a avoué que sa conversion lui paroissoit aussi difficile que celle d'un Roi qui renonceroit à son royaume" ("Mem.," vol. i. p. 230).

to this Queen which makes me write to her with a vigour that sometimes astonishes myself, and with the same sincerity as to our sisters. Even the King is pleased with those which she reads him, and sends me his thanks by her. She practises great self-control and fasts scrupulously, and as she is in delicate health, I sent her word from M. Singlin (for whom she has the utmost respect) that for her the most fitting mortification was that which is really spiritual, and the practice of kindness and of charity, of the love of her people and of the poor: this was in reply to a question in her last letter, which she desired me to refer to M. Singlin. I counsel her to forgive all injuries, and to hold the thought of vengeance in abhorrence; I remind her of the absolute humility that the creature (though she be a Queen) requires in relation to the Creator Who is her God and her King." *

The naïveté of the speaker had its peculiar charm, but it does not veil the fact that she is full of wonder at the condescension of a Queen who willingly submits to a rebuke from a Mother-Abbess. Her reason assured her that "in the sight of God Kings and Queens were as nothing," but she could not eradicate her inborn veneration for their exalted place, nor altogether suppress a certain exultation over her own familiar intercourse with Marie de Gonzagues, Queen of Poland. The fact should not be veiled, and is hardly to be regretted, because, as it did not lessen Angélique's independence in speech and action, it is a testimony to her consistent self-mastery. The outspoken sincerity of many of her letters is astonishing, and some of her recommendations were by no means calculated to conciliate the sensitive self-love of a royal lady who was inclined to pose as dévôte. For the self-love of the dévôte is a peculiarly insidious form of weakness, and often the vivid intuition possessed by Angélique was required to detect it. It was her capacity in that respect that made her so able a defender of Port-Royal, and but for her good sense the convent might have been overrun with faded beauties longing for a temporary haven from the tempests that they had helped to raise. The vitiated tastes that had been fed for years upon

* "Entretiens," No. 34.

perpetual excitement required a species of cautery before they could be conformed to the dead-level of self-repression that was the Port-Royal ideal, and all attempts at compromise ended in disheartening and melancholy failure. The fact of those failures only deepens the well-marked outline of Port-Royal standards, while the individual attempts testify to the charity of those who made them.

We have seen how Angélique strove for Mme. de Guemenée, and strove in vain. A more prolonged contest, and one less decided in its issue, marked the intercourse of Mme. de Sablé * with Port-Royal. Mme. de Guemenée might have belonged to the Court of Francis I. more fitly than to that of Henri IV. or of Louis XIII., but Mme. de Sablé was essentially the product of her age—the age of the précieuse and the savant. She loved sensation, and snatched it wherever, and in whatever form, it came in reach. There can be no doubt that she first turned to Port-Royal because it offered novelty. The glimpse that she caught of the course of life maintained within those walls made a strong appeal to her imagination, but, though susceptible to every fresh impression, she had exhausted her capacity for deep emotion, and did not offer very promising ground to those who desired her spiritual good. To Angélique her weakness was obvious, but Agnès was more optimistic, and to the last never ceased her efforts to effect the conversion of the wavering and unstable précieuse.

One point of reality in her there was that might be built upon; without it her link to Port-Royal must inevitably have broken, for Agnès was no more tolerant than Angélique of pose and affectation. That point was not, however, one to inspire admiration, being merely a most profound and overwhelming fear of death, the least stable of all impulses to penitence, though Agnès grounded many hopes upon it. It would seem as if a violent effort was required to conjure up any presentment of that grim reality in the midst of the brilliant and peculiarly artificial society of the period. But because Death had no allotted place in

* Née de Souvrées, daughter of M. des Courtineux, Governor to Louis XIII., born 1599, died 1678.

their environment, when he did appear to the reigning wits and beauties he must have done so in his most ghastly aspect, with the skeleton form and dancing gait with which the monks of olden days loved to depict him to the common people. It was thus that he appeared to Mme. la Marquise, and she, hating anything ugly even in suggestion, shrank with overwhelming horror from those periodical revelations of the inevitable.

Madeleine de Souvrées came of a race of bon-vivants whose wild lives had been notorious even in the days of the Valois ; he natural temperament developed her inherited tendencies, but she possessed a certain saving grace of refinement by no means common at the Court of Marie de Medicis. When Mme. de Rambouillet electrified society with her new theories of pure living and high thinking, Mme. de Sablé preferred to conform outwardly to the doctrines of the Chambre Bleue rather than be condemned to the dreary alternations of coarse buffoonery and unvarnished wickedness which prevailed at the Louvre in the early years of Louis XIII. But it was a far cry from the Chambre Bleue, with all its elaborate delicacy of speech and manner and diversion, to Port-Royal and the maxims of la Mère Agnès, and it was only the very negative quality of cowardice that led Mme. de Sablé thither. Her natural inclination was towards the school of the epicures. In her salon in the Place Royale, Sainte Evremond had aired his astounding doctrines in well-chosen phrases, and discoursed of all things in heaven and earth with a graceful well-bred sneer. And he had left the assembly of Mme. la Marquise and sought the society of his most intimate and cherished friend, Ninon de l'Enclos, without any violent revulsion of feeling, but, probably, with a sense that the notorious woman of pleasure was a truer and braver human being than the woman of fashion with her veneer of social morality. He and Ninon lived in the present and enjoyed it, and professed to be content with it until they died ; but Mme. de Sablé, though she might mimic the gay insouciance of the enchantress when lights burnt brilliantly and all the world was young, had none of her stoicism in the face of old age and death. A gift for epigram and a

sprightly wit seemed then to have but little value. She left the grand hôtel, where she had posed as queen among the précieuses, and fled to the precincts of Port-Royal, seeking the protection of the silent nuns that by violence of contrast between the present and the past, by sensations—absorbing from force of novelty—she might shut her ears to the sound of stealthily approaching footsteps, and hide from the dread Visitant, whose image haunted all her solitary moments, among the company of resolute women who made an honest endeavour "to die daily."

It it quite impossible to find the right niche at Port-Royal for Mme. de Sablé; her very devotion was "une dévotion élégante," and she had attacks of it just as she had attacks of the migraine. La Mère Agnès did what she could to comfort her, treating her throughout as one would treat a wayward child, with infinite patience and the most profound pity. But, with all her capacity for sympathy, understanding was not possible; to the very end of their correspondence she never masters her surprise at the tenacity with which the précieuse clung to her old tradition of delicate self-indulgence. Sometimes she seems to have humoured the fancies of Mme. la Marquise, and she and Angélique seldom refused to see her when she presented herself in the parlour, and tried to make the demand of Port-Royal less difficult for her to face.

But though she lived in the convent precincts it is unlikely that Mme. de Sablé had any inner knowledge of the life of Port-Royal. As we have seen, Angélique discouraged any intrusion from the outside world, being firmly of opinion that the observations and subsequent chatter of pious ladies did not tend to edification. And Mme. de Sablé was peculiarly incapable of imbibing the true spirit that animated the community. "Elle trouva qu'il etoit temps de faire la dévôte," says Tallemant des Réaux, writing of her retirement from the world of fashion; "mais quelle dévôte—bon Dieu!"* And as our intimacy with her increases we can but echo the exclamation of the frivolous chronicler. She had intrigued all her life, and she continued to

* "Historiettes," No. 2.

intrigue almost within the convent walls, cloaking the indulgence of her taste beneath the semblance of devotion to a persecuted party. She managed also to carry on a demure literary flirtation with La Rochefaucauld * (who as the Prince de Marsillac had been responsible for the most reckless escapades of Mme. de Longueville), and thereby revived the pleasant memories of an earlier time, without its inconvenient accompaniments of scandal. She maintained a voluminous correspondence, and many of her letters have been preserved to bear witness to the hold maintained by this world's vanities in a mind professedly concentrated on another. But most conspicuous of all was her love for luxury, for the refinements of good living, a propensity that grew rather than diminished when her views were outwardly more serious. To quote the relentless Tallemant once again—"Depuis qu'elle est dévôte c'est la plus grande friande qui soit au monde," and the term (incapable of adequate translation because, perhaps, the exquisite form of greed that it implies is not cultivated among the northern races) is one used repeatedly by all who wrote of her. Voiture would gloat, with the delight of the born gossip, over ridiculous anecdotes of Mme. de Sablé's ménage while she was still one of the inner circle at the Hôtel Rambouillet; and, when the thousand distractions of that period were only memories, and the spurious piety born of her natural cowardice divided her from the excitements of the world, she cultivated her fastidious tastes with a zest that was astounding even to her intimate friends. Pisani, the witty hunchback son of Mme. de Rambouillet observed—when the "conversion" of Mme. de Sablé was the sensation of the hour—that "she had not chased the devil out of her house, she had only installed him in the kitchen." †

The saying indicated a deeper knowledge of Mme. la Marquise than la Mère Agnès ever attained. There were elements in the respective natures of the two that could never be reconciled; the one was a dreamer and a mystic, the other coquette and gourmande to her dying day; but, though the latter was never

* See Victor Cousin, "Mme. de Sablé."

† "Mem. de l'Abbé Arnauld," Coll. Petitot, 2nd series, vol. 34.

completely understood at Port-Royal, it is impossible that either Angélique or Agnès could have closed their eyes to the fact that Mme. de Sablé was animated by the spirit that desires to bargain for salvation; that her idea of sacrifice was the voluntary acceptance of present discomfort to buy immunity from future punishment. She had even, it would appear, fixed the price she meant to pay, and felt herself entitled to the surplus of possible self-indulgence that it left her.

Her name is especially linked to that of Agnès, and there is a sort of fascination in the spectacle of the quiet nun striving so earnestly to teach even the alphabet of spiritual knowledge to the restless anxious child of the age, whom God seemed to have given to her care, yet for whose assistance her capacity for comprehension and direction seemed so ill-adapted. We can read the wondering commiseration that filled the soul of Agnès in the letters that she wrote to Mme. la Marquise, and even in her lack of understanding realize afresh the standards and the aspirations that were the reason of her being. "Surely, my dear sister," she wrote once (probably in response to the outpouring of grievances and agitations with which the précieuse periodically overwhelmed her friends at Port-Royal); "surely, my dear sister, while you think of all these things you leave yourself too little opportunity to prepare for the coming of the Son of God. Do you not wish to be numbered among those of whom the prophet said that they were blessed because they made ready to go to meet Him? Jesus Christ came to us to give us our salvation without obtaining any advantage for Himself. As S. Paul says, He pleased not Himself. It is, therefore, by renouncing self that we may hope to find Him, by laying down all that we have." *

That was the most elementary of the lessons la Mère Agnès could teach, but it was too difficult for Mme. de Sablé. It seems as though Port-Royal could help her little, either by speech or writing. "Da totum nil exquire," was a device that in the eyes of the précieuse was a plain outrage on common sense, and therefore there was only one method by which Agnès (baffled in

* "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," vol. ii. No. 456.

all attempts to establish any foundation of mutual sympathy) could hope to aid her. On her knees in the convent-chapel the nun prayed for her deluded sister with the fervour of faith which God had given her, and so was able to sustain hopes that were not, assuredly, based upon worldly knowledge, but yet, perchance, did not lack a firm foundation. It is a relief to turn away from Mme. de Sablé; for she is one of the false notes among the harmonies of Port-Royal. Agnès in a letter to her, when the community was mourning the death of the Mother, tells her that Angélique had murmured when speech was difficult, "Ma pauvre marquise!" * In that connection charity found its most fitting form in pity, and Angélique, on her death-bed reviewing what life had given her, could realize all that "la pauvre marquise," in her untiring quest for elusive joys, had forfeited.

It is, in fact, easy to be misled by the popular idea that gives Mme. de Sablé a place among the gallant men and women who were ready to let their fortunes stand or fall with the fortunes of Port-Royal. From first to last her position there was an anomaly. Not only was she incapable of learning its deepest lessons, but her aims, even the highest of them, were antagonistic to its spirit. She was not a penitent, but a speculator. Regarded in relation to the nuns who had been trained by Angélique and Agnès, she appears as a being from another world, and any suggestion of comparison is an absurdity; but if we place her side by side with one of her own kind, one who had been reared amid like impressions, had been submitted to like temptations, and had snatched with desperate eagerness at every experience life afforded her, and if we proceed to contrast the effect of the same influence upon the two, we shall realize that the distance betwixt Mme. de Sablé and the standard of Port-Royal was as immeasurable as that which divides sincerity and falsehood. The opportunity for such comparison is obvious, because in actual association with Mme. de Sablé at Port-Royal we find Mme. de Longueville.†

* "Lettres de la Mère Agnes," vol. ii. No. 359 (August 14, 1661).

† Anne-Geneviève de Bourbon, daughter of Henri, Prince de Condé, and Charlotte de Montmorenci, born 1619.

The effect of the personal touch of Angélique can be traced in conversions that are too numerous for detailed record. Yet perhaps the most notable of her conquests was this posthumous one. Many chances have combined to make Mme. de Longueville a recognized type of the penitents of Port-Royal, and the fact that her decisive renunciation of the world was subsequent to the death of Angélique does not affect its claim to be placed among the fruits of that great life-work. A little study of the characters of Angélique Arnauld and Anne-Geneviève de Bourbon reveals the affinity between them. What the Mother-Abbess might have been, had the grace of God not claimed her from her youth, that was Mme. la Duchesse. Both were born rulers, both by power of personality claimed deference that often grew to ardent loyalty, both had the fighting instinct deeply implanted, the one making war against conditions of society that denied her the foremost place, the other against the conditions of her human nature that made her the prey of continual temptation. In both cases the struggle was necessarily hopeless, but, while the one found in failure her inspiration to ever fresh endeavour, the other learnt that her deepest failure lay in the choice of her life's aim, and at the eleventh hour had strength of will to reconstruct the fabric of her desires and ambitions.

The same element of uncompromising violence that made Angélique resign authority at Port-Royal and submit to the petty exactions of Geneviève le Tardif, brought the magnificent Duchesse de Longueville to her knees at the feet of M. Singlin. The self-scrutiny and its result is absolutely real in both, and in them there is none of that tampering with sensation which is so evident in Mme. de Guemenée, in Mme. de Sablé, and, in differing degree, in some even among the nuns of Port-Royal. Thus, although Mme. de Longueville did not actually unite herself with Port-Royal till the year of Angélique's death, it is impossible completely to dissever them in spirit, nor could there be a truer exponent of the impression that Port-Royal made upon the world, than the Princess who had drunk so deeply of the world's cup of pleasure and of pain.

Society had been prepared for Port-Royal by the excesses of Henri IV., for the code of Port-Royal was the exact antithesis of the deliberate practice of self-indulgence. But the hermits could only set an example, and society needed an object-lesson which it would be impossible to ignore. In an elegant discussion among cultured persons the thesis might have been accepted "that a universal habit of self-seeking produces anarchy;" but it required the practical demonstration that was offered by the Fronde Rebellion to drive the lesson home.

As we study the years after the death of Richelieu, it seems to us that the Great Revolution must have been antedated had Paris never risen against Mazarin, so tremendous was the growth of the spirit of revolt; yet Louis XIV. cherished a grudge against Port-Royal because of its supposed connection with the humiliating memories of his youth; in his mind the précieuses, the Frondists, and the Jansenists were all linked to the thought of innovation, and held responsible for miseries whose memory was an indignity, and thenceforward in the royal judgment, all innovation not suggested from the throne was to be condemned as revolutionary. And in some measure the royal judgment was correct; the reforms of Mme. de Rambouillet and Angélique Arnauld were less opposed to the spirit of revolution than to that of despotism and the old régime. Yet no advance was ever made from Port-Royal towards the Frondists. Angélique and her sisters within their convent walls, the priests and the hermits in their seclusion, were not moved from their concentration on their own severe life-purpose by any desire to lure the wavering to participation in their pains and privileges.

It is not hard to understand that this quality of unchangeableness was a supreme attraction to Mme. de Longueville. There is no form of monotony so heart-sickening as that of perpetual change, and it would seem that Geneviève de Bourbon in some twenty years attempted to run through the whole gamut of human experience many times. Devotedly loyal at one moment utterly faithless the next, alternately the slave of family affection and the plaything of illicit passion, the one element that could be relied

upon as always present among her motives was a regard for her idea of herself. It mattered far less that her party won ascendancy than that she herself should be its foremost figure. The women of that day recorded their impressions freely, and were unsparing towards each other. Mme. de Nemours, the daughter of M. de Longueville by his first marriage, wrote thus of her step-mother (and, despite its malice, the sketch has the stamp of truth): "The strongest influence to make her choose a party was that by her choice she should display her cleverness; this was her chief desire always, her dominating passion. In a word, that which she believed most calculated to exalt her own importance was her chief consideration. Thus small things outweighed great ones, and those who would trace her conduct to any solid motive would meet with inevitable failure." * Admittedly Mme. de Longueville was a true type of the Women of the Fronde, and the Fronde itself is half-portrayed in those bitter words of Mme. de Nemours—the Fronde which owed its deepest element of tragedy to its futility of aim and method, to its combination of "grands noms, petits intérêts et souffrances immenses!" †

It was, indeed, at the cost of misery which is almost unimaginable, that Mme. de Longueville attained the pinnacle of power she had coveted, and held a court at the Hôtel de Condé, where she assumed a regal dignity which Anne of Austria could not emulate. At that moment—a moment when the King and his mother were in a sort of gilded imprisonment, carefully guarded and protected at the Palais Royal, when Monsieur the King's uncle lived almost in isolation at the Luxembourg while the gay world thronged the corridors of the Hôtel de Condé—Mme. de Longueville had no one of whom she might be envious, for her goal was reached, and for a moment she was supreme in France.‡ Success in itself makes a claim on admiration, and the brilliancy of the fair Duchess in this her "crowded hour" will eclipse, even in retrospect, the thought of the suffering people, in the city

* "Mem. de Joli," vol. i. p. 22.

† Feillet, "La Misère du Temps de la Fronde," p. 176.

‡ Bourgoing de Villefore, "Vie de Mme. de Longueville," vol. i. liv. 4.

streets or in the devastated country, who paid where she enjoyed.

Perhaps in that callousness, in the voluntary blinding of her eyes to the real character of the part she chose to play, there is a testimony to the secret claim a higher life made on her from her youth. We are told that Anne-Geneviève de Bourbon, summoned from her convent school, wept at the thought of mingling with the gay world, and longed to remain with the Carmelite nuns who had made childhood happy for her.* The infection of the world did not spare her long, it is true, and its sweet poison was served to her in very full measure, but the zest with which she snatched at all forbidden joy rather increases than lessens the impression that she was continually flying from a Voice that called insistently, the Voice that summoned Angélique in the convent chapel and Le Maistre in the Palais de Justice, but which seems often to grow silent for those who will not hearken. In all her triumphs she was dissatisfied, restless, jealous of herself when there was no other scope for jealousy. And those who had leisure to notice, wondered, for the fashionable quality was heedlessness, and sin and pain and death itself were made a theme for laughter.

No one could have dreamed that Port-Royal and the relentless penances of Saint-Cyran's disciples would end the path on which Mlle. de Bourbon, the brilliant child whom Voiture celebrated, the darling of the Hôtel Rambouillet, set forth with dancing feet. Yet to us the knowledge of that grim finale lends an interest to her meteor course, for the deep reality that was lacking amid the wit and the innocent folly of the Chambre Bleue, undreamed of in the dark hours of self-abandonment that followed, awaited her there; and by the grace of God she understood her need; and, gradually, gropingly, cumbered by old habits of intrigue and double-dealing, yet as eager in this hard quest as she had ever been in any other, she learnt to grasp and hold the treasure of Truth, of which Port-Royal was the casket. Many another touched it for a while—a few had strength and courage to retain it—but not one among the worldlings to whom Port-

* Victor Cousin, "La Jeunesse de Mme. de Longueville."

Royal seemed to offer help, made that treasure so utterly their own as did the great Duchess whose wild ambitions had been the curse of France.

The odds against her in her struggle with the forces that opposed the self-will of her youth had been overwhelming. The fight she had made, at first half-conquering and afterwards in utter failure, had been desperate, and waged with desperate tenacity. She had proved her courage, and she needed it in all its fulness when the nature of the combat changed and the habit of a score of years of constant sin must needs be overcome. Port-Royal, and no lighter ordinance, was the only remedy for her at that moment—Port-Royal, with its theory and tradition of unsparing strength—and the full efficacy of the Port-Royal theory in touch with sin in all its hideousness, was proved before the eyes of all the world through her.

For the magnificent Duchess did not find the path to penitence made smooth. She had begun her search for it years ere she found it. Before the wars were over, before she had broken with the fierce desires that had mastered her so long, she was already turning with longing to a possibility of retreat with her friends the Carmelites. "There is nothing for which I long so much," she wrote to the Prioress of their convent in the Faubourg S. Jacques, "as that the war may end, and so permit me to end my days with you. . . . My life was given me simply that I might discover all that this world contains of bitterness. . . . I would have you write to me often to help me to that consciousness of God which as yet I have not got, but without which I shall still fulfil what I have written to you." *

Such an appeal was not unfitted for the quarter to which it was destined, but it was not thus that ladies of fashion approached Port-Royal. The outward glories of the mother-house of the French Carmelites might, in part, have supplied the defect which Mme. de Longueville realized in herself, their splendid ceremonial might have calmed and elevated her fevered senses until she found a measure of peace, and thus, perhaps, in dignified seclusion,

* Bourgoing de Villefore, "Vie," part i. liv. 4.

have passed her later years serenely, had her nature been easier to satisfy. Instead she struggled through doubt and darkness that tested her resolution to the utmost ere grace was given and she found the light. Her experience of direction was a reflection of Angélique's thirty years earlier; but she was far less competent to direct herself, and she turned despairingly from one to another of the directors most respected at the time, unable to conceal from herself the utter ineffectiveness of the exaggerated outward penances which they prescribed for the relief of her overburdened soul. She shrank from nothing, but she needed another sort of remedy. "We may be absorbed in our sense of sin," wrote a hermit of Port-Royal,* "feeling it with shame and misery; it is one of our chiefest duties that we should do so; but if we are content with this consciousness, and concentrate our soul on it completely, we fulfil only a part of our duty; it may be in truth that there is no touch therein of anything that is not human, the result of self-esteem disguised as humility, or of a secret uneasiness at not being what we desire to be in our view of ourselves."

There in all its subtlety is the diagnosis of the disease that threatened Mme. de Longueville as she deprived herself of sleep and food, and endured the varieties of self-inflicted pain, under the advice of the succession of confessors who strove to aid her. For even in her repentance it was herself that filled the horizon of her mental vision—a self as clear-defined as when she was queening it—at the Hôtel de Condé or contesting the devotion of de Marsillac or de Nemours with Mme. de Montbazon. And only Port-Royal could supply the remedy. "Il est bon d'être lassé et fatigué par l'inutile recherche du vrai bien, afin de tendre les bras au Libérateur," wrote Pascal,† and Mme. de Longueville learnt to echo him. She found that the ornamental, the artificial, all that could minister to the old instincts under new names and beneath the cloak of piety, must be stripped away if she would reach reality of light; and it was the absolute single-mindedness of

* Du Guet, "Sur la crainte de jugements de Dieu." See Sainte-Beuve, "Port-Royal," vol. v. p. 117.

† "Pensées," art. xvi.

Port-Royal that gave it its power to lead her at last to Le Vrai Liberateur. It was boldest and sternest just at the point where another ordinance was often hesitating. Mme. de Longueville found peace at the hands of M. Singlin,* and prized it the more deeply for the years of unrest that led her to him. The record of his dealing with her might have been written by one of Saint-Cyran's penitents, for M. Singlin was a worthy disciple of the great master of direction, yet we may realize the mastery of the spiritual over the carnal, of the transformation that the Church could work in human relations, a little more deeply when we remember that M. Singlin, to whom the magnificent Duchess became obedient, was a man of the people, without erudition or any grace of speech.

The intellectual vigour and force of personality possessed by Saint-Cyran might, in purely human conditions, have subjugated a weary woman whose mind had been formed at the Hôtel Rambouillet; but M. Singlin was the bearer of God's message to her, and her recognition of the message was the more complete because the messenger was nothing in himself. In an age that loved writing there was a style peculiar to each section of society; the Court-memoirists, the précieuses, the Frondists, each bear the special cachet of their party, but Port-Royal was of all the most distinctive, and Mme. de Longueville—moved to record the wonderful weeks that meant for her a veritable new birth—writes not as précieuse or as Frondiste, but with the uncompromising directness of Port-Royal. La Mère Angélique was dead, yet as we read we might fancy that she had inspired and guided the pen when Mme. de Longueville tells the story of her intercourse with M. Singlin and his message to her.†

"Once more I made a general confession," she writes in 1661, and that bald statement has its own force when we remember the mere historic testimony to the past of the great Frondiste. "I was moved thereto," she adds, "by the sense God gave me that

* N. Fontaine, "Mem.," vol. iii. p. 317.

† "See "Nécrologe de Port-Royal," vol. ii. containing all the statement of Mme. de Longueville.

the independence which I had maintained for some years previously was prejudicial to my soul.

"The first thing required of me was that I should be alone; not only to give me time for the devotions that one from whom the Body and Blood of Christ is withheld must need ere she may receive Them, but also as some kind of atonement for all the misspent time in the past, seeing that I was one of those who must renounce lawful things, having been so utterly the slave of that which is unlawful.

"In my solitude I was required to say at different times the seven penitential psalms with the intention of penitence, and each time I said a psalm to meditate on it for a quarter of an hour. And further, I might not enter a church save with the sense that I was an outcast, keeping my eyes upon the ground and never raising them, neither towards the sacred Host nor towards the Altar.

"My time was to be distributed betwixt prayer and reading and handiwork. Even with regard to the things of God I was bidden to preserve silence. Nor was I permitted to reprove any one, but while I maintained a continual observation of my own sins to be unmindful of the sins of others, there being nothing so alien to the spirit of compunction (wherein true penitents should live) than observation of the faults of others, that inclination by itself being enough to destroy the real disposition towards penitence in a soul completely."

Thus far one of the earnest priests who were, even in those dark days, to be found in Paris, might have been leading her. The demands were very definite, but they were not beyond what the occasion and the circumstances warranted, and the distinctive note of Port-Royal was yet to come. In coming it is unmistakable. "I was directed to ask God that I might make this offering of myself, not from any obligation to do so, under which I might feel myself, but by a true desire, by a free impulse of my heart."

There, simple and pure, is the great principle of Port-Royal, the understanding of the grace of God, not as a term for

theologians, but as the light of the world. Sacrifice of self, service where it might be offered, these things were acceptable, but it might well be that there was no "touch therein of anything that is not human." Mme. de Longueville was led by circumstances into a review of her past life; therein she tested, as she thought, "all that this world contains of bitterness;" she was haunted by the ghosts of dead passions and tortured by the wounds which, living, they had dealt her, and was thus prepared for a change, both in practice and in point of view. A change was, in fact, inevitable, for youth was slipping from her, and she had none of the easy light-heartedness of that new Epicurean school of which Ninon de l'Enclos was the type and the model.

Geneviève de Bourbon might pass from the extreme of joy to sorrow, from the excess of triumph to despair, but those swift and confusing alternations did not lessen the depth and reality of each emotion when it came. Therefore, at an age when another woman could have clung to the remnant of her youth, she was worn out with feeling. She had abstained from nothing that tempted her, denied herself no desire, repudiated the laws of God and man, and she had found for herself that the end of these things is death. Logically, by a purely intellectual sequence, she must, having arrived at that point, have sought some means of reconstructing conditions that had ended in utter failure and bitterness. But belonging, as she did, to a people where the artificial is a factor in the national character that can never be ignored, it is conceivable that she, as a brilliant and impressionable woman, might so have hedged herself with the forms of religion and the outward professions of penitence as to conclude a satisfactory bargain with her conscience, so to speak; and satisfy the insistent misgivings that were, to one of her temperament, the inevitable result of enforced leisure.

Instead: "I was directed to ask God that I might make this offering of myself, not from any obligation to do so under which I might feel myself, but by a true desire, by a free impulse of the heart!" The direction is characteristic of Port-Royal. Mme. de Longueville had been the slave of human desire, but she had never

pictured a desire that could compel her to self-forgetfulness; self-absorption had been the chief feature, even of her occasional phases of violent repentance. She had been ready, for years before the day on which she first passed through the convent guichet of Port-Royal, to make an offering of herself on the altar of her disappointed hopes and vain regrets, and her world awaited the moment of her retirement to applaud another pathetic sequel to a picturesque career. But Port-Royal demanded that the ever-present self should be pushed aside, and Mme. de Longueville, yielding to Port-Royal, and abandoning herself to the dominion of "la sainte folie de la Croix," found peace at last. If we follow her a little further, we find, it is true, that she was the prey of those subtleties of temptation that may be the accompaniment of the most whole-hearted repentance in such a complex character as hers; that she entered into a species of intrigue with herself, which resulted in an endeavour to elicit a word of encouragement by feigning greater self-abhorrence than she really felt. But these miserable and humiliating hindrances did not, and could not, disturb the deep reality of her aspirations. Assuredly the prayer that she was directed to offer in that first hour of her re-birth brought its response of blessing, and by a free impulse of the heart Mme. de Longueville laid down her record of sin before God, and yielded her future to the guidance He should give her.

We know that M. Singlin was as tardy as Saint-Cyran himself in acceptance of a spiritual charge. It was, therefore, the more fitting that it should have been his task to guide two souls whose guidance meant such wide effect outside themselves as was the case with Mme. de Longueville and with Pascal. It is plain that, when the charge was once accepted, M. Singlin was as unsparing in external claims as he was searching in his spiritual probing. Of all the many records of him there is none more characteristic than that of Mme. de Longueville, although (in common with every intimate chronicle of the externals of spiritual experience) there is much in it that is repugnant. She was bidden, for instance, to say the Miserere daily, prostrated with her face to the ground. Also that she should awake nightly at two o'clock to

pray for a time, and to ask for mercy on her sins. Before agreeing to hear her full confession, M. Singlin required that she should give him assurance (1) that she was prepared to leave the world in case at some future time it should be possible, and it should appear that God asked this of her; (2) that she set no limit to her obedience, either in inward things that were for advance towards perfection, or in outward, touching the regulation of her affairs. Her own words give the truest inpression of the spirit of his exhortations. "He said to me," she writes, "that submission covered everything without any reservation; that a true Penitent was ready for whatever might be asked of him, not merely by obedience, but by an impulse of love. We must realize that we can never do enough for God, and that some things that to others are merely useful are necessary for us.

"Further, he said that one of the deepest proofs of sincerity was abstinence from all complaint, even to one's friends, about the troubles of life, the slander, and unfairness, and unkindness, and ingratitude; that these things, however unjust they may be in themselves, should be taken as being given us by the justice of God; that by our repining we lose the blessing of them, and the strongest proof we can have that we have not really renounced our love of self-indulgence is the regret with which we meet any deprivation. We must not, then, minister to ourselves by those outpourings which self-love inspires, we must not lament to our friends nor seek to win their pity."

Once again let us pause to give a thought to the past of that illustrious lady. The great ones of the earth in those days were wont to claim dignity and luxury and soft living as a natural necessity. The world must bow down before the magnificent Princess on whom the good things of this life had been given so abundantly. For her was reserved the first place at a banquet, it was for her to lead the gayest revels with every eye admiring her beauty, and it was the chief care of scores of anxious human beings that nought should go amiss that might displease her. It is true that the passionate heart of Geneviève de Bourbon made claims that destiny refused, and she became the prey of a frenzy

of resentment against the ruling of this mortal life in consequence, but the magic of her great name and pride of race secured for her a consideration that was a shield against many of life's chances, and so sharpened her susceptibility to every slight, and her intolerance of every difficulty. It was thus that she was prepared for Port-Royal and for M. Singlin, and truly the miracle of the grace of God could hardly be more radiantly apparent than when the arrogance of the Bourbons was forgotten in that bitter penitence of an erring woman.

And beside Mme. de Longueville in her self-abasement, leading, supporting, pointing forward, it needs no strain of fancy to depict the figure of Angélique, the figure that human eyes might see no longer, but which lived in so many memories as an ever-present source of inspiration. For she had waged the same fight with the same concentrated purpose, had known the same subtleties of temptation, had found it as hard to stoop to the low door of the Church. In her own eye the Mother-Abbess was as faulty as the great Frondiste, and though in the eyes of the world the record of one was unsullied and the other as scarlet, for both perhaps, equally, the great acceptance had meant self-violence, and salvation came "so as by fire." "I was required to renounce all created things," wrote Mme. de Longueville, "and, indeed, I was once during my prayer possessed with the desire to do so. I had been reading in the New Testament this saying of Jesus Christ, just before His Passion : 'I pray not for the world,' and it seemed to me that this holy saying should be the foundation of that renunciation required of us by the Church at baptism ; I have tried to make a renewal of it and to humble myself because I have fallen away from it so cruelly. I have thus had a great wish to renounce all the joys, desires, standards, and ideas of the world, and to give myself to God, that I might accomplish that which He shows me I must do, if I would not be left outside the Divine Prayers of His Son, nor of the grace that they call down.

"Yesterday two convictions came to me, and coming first to my mind, they afterwards filled my heart. Both came very quickly, and the effect was as of a curtain raised before my eyes,

and lowered again when that which I saw had made its impress on my heart and mind. The first was that death was desirable because it withdraws us from the necessity of sinning and displeasing God; the second, that one would grasp true happiness if one sought nothing either small or great in created things, but only in God. My heart was pierced by these things at the same moment that they were visible to my mind, and my mind saw them as though I had seen a substance with my eyes, as though—as I have just said—a curtain was drawn back and let fall at the same moment, and I am convinced of these two points because I have seen and felt them, but I do not see and feel them now."

Mme. de Longueville assures us that her insidious vanity lay in wait for her always. "My self-love was more satisfied when I spoke evil of myself than when I did not speak of myself at all," but the simplicity with which she tells that spiritual experience is an assurance on the other side that the spirit of the précieuse, with its elaborate finery of phraseology, had already given place to the child-like plainness of Port-Royal. The conclusion of that curious record of hers deepens the same impression. "On Innocents' Day I was anxious that God should give me sufficient grace to testify to Him as they did, in dying for Him—that is to say, in dying to my own self-esteem. And I asked of the dying Christ, before whose image I was praying, that He would impart to me some share in His death to help me to die to myself.

"It seemed to me that God showed me that there was no other way of coming to Him save by leaving greatness and wealth and position and all that I possess, and in the moment that I saw it was so, I felt a great desire to do it, and I made supplication to God that He would give me both the power and the will.

"Domine ante te omne desiderium meum."

It is believed that by her unshrinking courage in their defence Mme. de Longueville postponed the worst persecution that overwhelmed the nuns and hermits of Port-Royal. It is certain that she wrote to the Pope,* and was not afraid to tell him that they had been for twenty years "an object of hatred to a certain

* July, 1667.

powerful society," and that this, and this only, was the foundation of the accusations brought against them ; * and the idea that her protection was of real service to them is supported by the fact that the personal visit and command of de Harlai, Archbishop of Paris, which necessitated the withdrawal of all the postulants and pensionnaires from Port-Royal, took place one month only after the death of the Duchess. And that command was, undoubtedly, the beginning of the end.

But, though that question may have been of import to the community to whom each hour of reprieve meant additional strength, to posterity it is immaterial. The great service that Mme. de Longueville has rendered to Port-Royal has no connection with social influence or Papal authority. It was her part to exonerate Port-Royal on a point where it was most commonly misconstrued. It was said that the creed of Angélique and Saint-Cyran was a creed of fear and trembling, of dread and not of hope. But in Mme. de Longueville we find one who had indeed grown hopeless ere she came to Port-Royal, one most truly "lassé et fatigué de l'inutile recherche du vrai bien," who found there a certainty of hope as complete and satisfying as though the promise of the Saviour had been spoken in hearing of her human ears. Because she had sinned so deeply her testimony has a value distinct from any borne by those whose lives stood clear in the sight of the world. Of such there were many at Port-Royal, and they received there the special seal of sanctity for which a long training of self-restraint had made them ready. But the years of Mme. de Longueville's triumphs were not a hopeful preparation for the message that often baffled the understanding of those who were consciously awaiting it ; and the eagerness with which she received the message, with its tremendous import and its claim upon response, gave a new theme for the explanation which the Port-Royalists applied to all the enigmas of human development. They said it was a new instance of the direct bestowal of the gift of grace ; and it was thus that, in a simple phrase, they sought to sum up the greatest of all mysteries, to solve the

* Bourgoing de Villefore, "Vie," part ii. liv. 6.

insoluble enigma perpetually confronting all who have eyes to see, perpetually asserting a supremacy of power in that which we can neither understand nor measure.

If we watch in the same spirit as Angélique watched, we must needs tremble. Whether it be made clear by the Princess who left her mark on the history of a nation, or in the unnoticed development of insignificant persons, the summons of God is unchanging, and the evasion of it the greatest of enigmas. In every generation and under all conditions we know that the Voice of God does speak in the human soul, and that He has given the capacity for response ; yet to our dim sight it seems as evident that there are some to whom He has not spoken or to whom faculty for hearing Him has been denied. The thought of Port-Royal was fixed upon this mystery with tremendous concentration, and experience increased their awe of it. Humanly their attempt at solution brought them to shipwreck, for it was their doctrine of grace which was most severely reprobated ; intellectually it involved them in labyrinths of metaphysics from which it is hard to extricate them, but spiritually their sense of incapacity to understand, engendered, in some at least among them, an infinite humility. It brought them back from criticism of systems or formulæ or theories to postulate again the "God only" of Saint-Cyran, and realize the helplessness of man's intelligence before the purposes of God.

"All men together," said Angélique to Jacqueline Pascal, "with all the eloquence and all the persuasiveness that can possibly be imagined could not reveal the truth to any one who was not first enlightened by God." *

Hidden in the despair of that conclusion is the surest ground of hope. The aspect was not then fully revealed to the speaker. To her enlightenment came only with the touch of death, but there were some at Port-Royal whose faith in the loving kindness of God grew as they realized their own inability to understand His method.

And with that realization the possibility of the desire to

* "Relation de Jacqueline Pascal" (Faugère, "Vie").

bargain ceased. Their self-oblation was not the price of Paradise, but the necessary consequence of contemplating the Sacrifice on Calvary. The cup that their Lord drank was to be grasped and drained to the dregs if He condescended to offer it. In the offer was their highest honour. The nuns of Port-Royal believed that they could best prove their gratitude by the observance of their Rule in spirit and in letter, by the fast that was to be maintained, not only from Ash Wednesday to Easter, but from Easter to Ash Wednesday. To prove it thus was the endeavour of their lives, and because they set their standard high, and reached continually beyond their grasp, continual failure proved an efficient antidote to the poison of self-complacency. They poured out all they had to give at the feet of the Crucified; they were each one assured that He had summoned them, and that the form of their obedience was in accordance with His will; but as they knelt before His altar the ever-growing wonder of their vocation did not move them to self-esteem, but to abasement. The thought of the world outside rushing on in its blindness, unmindful of the Treasure they had found, taught them no song of triumph; it summoned them to awestruck wonder and not to confidence, and infused new depths of meaning into their oft-repeated protestation: "Domine non sum dignus."

CHAPTER XIII

THE VOCATION OF JACQUELINE PASCAL

We have sought to follow in outline the work of Angélique, the Mother-Abbess, and to reconstruct before the eyes of the mind that fabric of Port-Royal (planned for endurance, yet destined for such brief existence) which had been built up by her endeavours. In so doing, we have come in touch with many life-stories; yet each and all are knit together in a web of mysterious developments, and linked at one point or another to that strong central pattern which Angélique in her own evolution of experience had learnt to weave as the basis of reform.

Each separate figure, if it grows living to us, takes its allotted place in the group that gathers about la Mère Angélique; it is she who directs and inspires and controls. Yet one we find whose hand might be grasped for a time in that of the Mother-Abbess, who might for a time be overshadowed by her dominant personality, but who can never be regarded as a unit among numbers. Port-Royal is incomplete without Jacqueline Pascal. Her destiny, it may be, could not have come to its true fruition without Port-Royal; yet, though she would have eagerly disclaimed the idea of separation, she was by her very nature separate. She is close to Angélique, to Agnès, to Marie-Claire, but she is above them. She seems, as it were, to have mounted by their aid, but, because they had already found the way, and so saved her the toil of seeking it, she was permitted further attainment than for them was possible.

The name she bore suggests how great was the treasure that she was permitted to consecrate when she made profession.

Jacqueline was worthy to be the sister of Blaise Pascal; she was endowed with extraordinary intelligence, and her governed will and keen self-scrutiny forced her from the hazes of prejudice, the unrealized limitation in outlook, which often obscures the clearness of a woman's vision. The deepest spirit of obedience; the truest humility; the effort after self-effacement; these, with all the meaning that Port-Royal gave them, we find in her. And we find more than these. Port-Royal made its claim, and she, in responding, purified herself of all the dross with which the world's traditions and mistakes had weighted her. So freed, it was for her to reach upward, beyond the rest. She learnt by them, and with them. She shared in their offering of themselves, in their trembling humility, in their adoration. But, as she knelt with them at the feet of the Crucified, her soul soared towards the Vision that awaits all those who have climbed the steep ascent and watched on Calvary. The mystery of the Passion, the shuddering thought of human pain inflicted upon God, so filled the minds and hearts of the Port-Royal nuns that they ventured their eyes no further; therein they found more than sufficient to inspire self-dedication. But Jacqueline was taught to look beyond. Her brief career was one of swift development, and in it the slowly growing greatness of Port-Royal found its supreme expression.

There is a certain charm in thinking of the shielded lives (of which there must have been many examples within the convent walls) that were trained from their earliest beginning to the austere and self-devoted traditions of Port-Royal, and from childhood had no dearer aim than to be absolutely identified with the community. But Jacqueline Pascal would have been stunted rather than developed by the hot-house atmosphere that for others was the best chance of growth, and assuredly there was nothing in the surroundings of her youth that could portend the strange fulfilment awaiting her early promise. No mystery shrouds her childhood. Her brother's fame was so great as to drag all who were near him into publicity, and she was so notable herself in individuality that the simple unaffected records of Mme. Perier

(the eldest of the three children of Etienne Pascal, lawyer) rank among the treasures of biographical literature. As a child she earned actual celebrity for her poetic and dramatic gifts, and she won the notice of the Queen, of Corneille, and of Richelieu.

Her intellectual precocity was linked with such childish arts as were most calculated to turn vague notice into definite favour. Her father had incurred the Cardinal's displeasure, and she obtained his forgiveness by an apt petition proffered on his behalf at a moment when His Eminence had smiled upon her.* Such a feat, made memorable by its practical result on the family fortunes, cannot have failed to stimulate the self-importance of a child of ten, and Jacqueline had always been her father's idol. Every detail of her environment suggested the probability that she would become a précieuse † of the type of Mlle. de Gournay or Mlle. de Scudery; either centred on one subject to the exclusion of ordinary human sympathies, or contentedly self-centred. The limitations that hedged the free exercise of a woman's intellect rendered unusual mental gifts a doubtful benefit for women. It was a foregone conclusion that Mlle. Pascal should be warped in her outlook upon life by her keen perception of its fallacies and inconsistencies. She did not confine her criticism to social conditions. At eighteen she seems to have weighed the system and traditions of the Catholic Church, and found them wanting. "Its practices were not such as could be accepted by reasonable minds," ‡ was her sage decision. She and her brother were on terms of the closest sympathy and friendship. Blaise Pascal was, before all else, a mathematician, and there is little doubt that Jacqueline's mind was of the same quality, of the keen deliberate order, best adapted for that science. It is curious to realize that the two were discussing, criticizing, and condemning the traditions of the Church and their abuses, in their quiet home in Normandy,

* N. Fontaine, "Mem. Supplément," art. xi.

† Contemporary definition: "Une précieuse est un précis de l'esprit et un extrait de l'intelligence humaine. Rien ne peut se dérober à leur curiosité" (Abbé de Pure, "La Précieuse ou Le Mystère des Ruelles").

‡ Mme. Perier, "Vie de Jacqueline Pascal."

when Saint-Cyran was languishing at Vincennes, and the world of Paris buzzing over Antoine Arnauld and his first great book. The chains destined to bind them both were forging, but although Paris might ring with the clanging of the hammers, no echo of it reached them.

It was not until 1646 that the fame of Port-Royal claimed their attention, and then the rumour of it came to them by one of those circumstances which it is the custom to call chance. M. Etienne Pascal met with an accident. The surgeons called in to attend him were followers of Saint-Cyran; they lent Arnauld's work "de la Fréquente Communion" to the son and daughter of their patient; they talked of the wonderful new light that was searching the shadowy places of ecclesiastical administration, and they were responsible for turning the thoughts of Blaise Pascal towards S. Augustine. Mme. Perier relates that when she and her husband joined her family at Rouen in the February of that year, she found them—according to the phrase of the time—"toute en Dieu." Jacqueline was not quite twenty-one: she seems to have been as charming as she was brilliant, and her hand was eagerly sought in marriage. Marriage in the abstract, however, had no attraction for her, and her affections were not engaged. In fact, the new ideas that were reshaping the direction of her brother's mind were to her so entirely absorbing, that she had no thought to spare for the interests natural to her age and condition. Nor could there be any standing still in the quest on which she had embarked; and we, who can now glean knowledge of her state of mind, and catch glimpses of the inner working of Port-Royal, can find no room for wonder in the fact that a magnetism, silent, unrecognized, yet irresistible, drew her towards Angélique, and towards those disciples of Saint-Cyran who preserved his spirit and strove to carry on the work he had begun.

In the autumn of 1647 Blaise Pascal went to Paris. The nominal reason for his journey was to obtain medical advice, as his health was at all times precarious, but most likely he was actuated also by a desire to be in touch with the centres of

thought and of inquiry. Jacqueline went with him, and together they listened to the sermons of M. Singlin in the Church of Port-Royal de Paris, and absorbed the substance of Saint-Cyran's teaching with the rapidity that their intellectual gifts made possible. It was not long before Mlle. Pascal obtained an introduction to la Mère Angélique. We have no details of that first interview. There was no love of publicity in either of the two who took part in it, but, though we can only conjecture what passed between them, we know that to Jacqueline it must have marked the crisis in her life. M. Singlin's aversion to undertaking spiritual responsibility was even greater than that of Saint-Cyran himself, and the intellectual possibilities that were patent to the most simple-minded in Jacqueline Pascal would have specially disinclined him to deal with her. Nevertheless, very shortly after her visit to the parlour at Port-Royal de Paris she was under his direction, for la Mère Angélique had the perception to discern the deep affinity betwixt these two souls, so differently endowed by nature that their connection is a new proof that spiritual light is independent of intellectual attainment.

From the moment of her first admission within the convent precincts, Jacqueline Pascal was penetrated by the desire for the religious life as it was practised at Port Royal. The system of which she had formerly been utterly intolerant assumed a new aspect, and the spirit of the Rule of the religious, without which its forms were only an empty mummery, revealed itself to her with a clearness that never afterwards was dimmed. Referring in later years to their first interview, M. Singlin declared that he had never known such strong evidence of a religious vocation as he had found in her. Those months in Paris were marked by many discoveries, and were full of that excitement inevitable to every mind that is possessed for the first time by the deep things of God, however disciplined and balanced it may be. Blaise Pascal was infected by his sister's fervour to such a degree that he offered no opposition when she told him of her desire to enter the community, and his encouragement put the final seal to her resolve to persevere against all opposition. As time passed both

M. Singlin and Angélique were satisfied that the girl's ardour was not the ephemeral growth of novelty and impulse, and with that conclusion came the necessity of facing the practical difficulty of the position. The question involved in that difficulty was extremely complex, capable of many different solutions, and springing from the central theory of the religious vocation. For this reason, if for no other, the career of Jacqueline Pascal would be supremely interesting, for it demonstrates the possibility of a vocation so strong as to be independent of outward circumstances, and suggests that the call to self-consecration, heard and obeyed with such single-minded readiness as she displayed, is not subversive of exterior conditions, but superior to them.

Forty years earlier Angélique Arnauld, constrained by the same convictions as were ruling Jacqueline Pascal, had defied authority, and refused to recognize her father's claim to direct her movements. Nor did the fierce self-criticism she practised ever suggest misgivings as to the righteousness of her determination. In her case the claim of God stood clear, but she was already a religious, and therefore her experience was no criterion for the guidance of others. Probably the fact that M. Etienne Pascal was a devout man, and that there was nothing in the surroundings of her home that could outrage his daughter's sensibilities, won for him more consideration than was always accorded to the parents of a prospective nun. And if we realize the temptations involved by "la vie mondaine" as it was in those days, and can imagine a priest of high ideals required to decide the destiny of a girl in whom the phenomenon of the religious vocation had made itself apparent, we cannot wonder greatly if he condoned a measure of deceit and counselled evasion of recognized authority, to secure the safety of a soul that must otherwise have risked such mortal danger. There was much exaggeration in the stories that were rife of the means adopted to recruit the novitiate of decaying Orders with daughters of wealthy and powerful families; but they could often be proved to have some foundation of truth, and the true religious suffered for the misdeeds of their nefarious sisters.

Angélique's standard was not easy to fulfil; her conception of the privilege of the religious was so exalted that she did not smooth the way for those who aspired to it. "You know that my tongue has long since lost the trick of flattery," she wrote grimly to one who desired to be received at Port-Royal, "and if God brings you to me you will see it even more clearly." *

She never humoured individual idiosyncrasies, or showed any tenderness for the venial weakness that many women, as strict as she in the foundations of discipline, might overlook. And as we picture that undeviating, unflinching discipline, the magnetism of Port-Royal seems to project itself across the centuries. The scope of Angélique's requisition was a source of strength, the knowledge that her demand would never vary and that (because it did not stop short of perfection) it could never be fulfilled, was an attraction, not a deterrent. Others might encourage and nurture the first uncertain suggestion of a vocation; imaginative women might be lured into the cloister by the appeal of an external religion; they might even justify those who had influenced them by finding peace and contentment in retirement from the hubbub of the world, but for such as these Port-Royal was no fitting haven.

Perhaps the one exception to the rule, steadfastly maintained by the Mother-Abbess, of keeping the door closed unless the knocking were persistent is as characteristic as the rule itself; her relation of it proves that there was no mystery enveloping the methods of Port-Royal, even when they were hard to justify; and if we contrast this exception with the form of the vocation of Jacqueline Pascal, it becomes the more impressive.

Angélique tells us that when the new building in the Faubourg S. Jacques was nearly finished, a young and pretty girl, gazing at it, said to her companion that she "wondered who the unfortunates might be for whom that prison was a-building!" The idle words were prompted, most likely, by that spirit of defiance which the outward symbols of convent life are apt to kindle, for the speaker was not ignorant of Port-Royal, and a

* "Lettres," vol. i. No. 278.

little later she asked permission to see a friend who had been admitted to the community. The friend was one of the nuns who had gone to Dijon, but Angélique herself saw the visitor in the parlour. Very early in the interview the girl's character seems to have revealed itself, and Angélique bade her choose betwixt marriage and the cloister, for the life she was then leading was unworthy of her. She did not deny the truth of this assertion, and went, as she was bidden, into the chapel to pray for guidance before the altar. Thus far the story has nothing that is not in keeping with the ordinary customs of la Mère Angélique, who would naturally have attempted to summon a frivolous mind to realization of the responsibilities of life. But the sequel is astounding. The girl returned to the parlour in great agitation, trembling and incoherent, and Angélique then felt herself constrained by a violent impulse to bid her stay at Port-Royal, and not to risk return to a world where she would assuredly come to disaster. Inevitably the strong personality compelled the weaker; but when we learn that this new-found daughter of S. Benedict began her sojourn within convent walls by an attack of fever, we find no cause for wonder. She remained, however, for a year later she sought la Mère Angélique (who had then resigned her office) to know if she were really called to the consecration of her life. And Angélique, fully alive to her responsibility in the decision, replied without misgiving: "Yes, my sister, I am assured that such is the will of God." *

The story (told with most evident awe by the chief actor in it) is curiously suggestive. The call to the religious vocation is no less directly Divine because a human voice announces it. The danger of mistake is greater, without doubt; but it was Angélique's aim to live with every thought and every motive consciously laid bare and submitted to Divine guidance. That fact, if admitted and understood, removes this incident from the category of those sensational legends which are allowed to obscure the most elementary understanding of the cloistered life to the

* "Relation de la Mère Angélique," Entretien xvi.

ordinary mind. It was a solitary instance, and as such should have no power to lower our idea of the standard of la Mère Angélique or of Port-Royal. The true ideal of the religious life necessarily prevents the danger of "luring the unwary" into adoption of it. The essence of its sacredness is lost when deliberate human machination is allowed connection with it. Character may be disciplined, it is true, and capacities that were in danger of wasting may be trained and adequately employed by the system and Rule of a community. The result of a deliberate sacrifice of inclination and independence for the service of God is satisfying to the human judgment; it is a definite witness to Christ, and has great and unquestionable value. But the strongest attribute of the true religious life is the impossibility of even seeking the result; it gives no net return, no scope for calculation. God overwhelms all else.*

Angélique Arnauld accomplished much. She followed as God drew her. Against her natural instincts she held her will in prone submission, until she grew into confidence that the prompting of her actions was in accordance with the Heavenly Will. Her growth is clear, and the purpose of her life and its fulfilment a great and inspiring theme for study, but when we turn from her to Jacqueline Pascal, we know that the nun beheld a light that was hidden from the Abbess, and by that knowledge may be forced to grope towards a truth not easily to be assimilated to our ordinary traditions of thought.

As soon as the career of Mlle. Pascal is diverted from the channel of natural probability by the force of spiritual conviction, it begins to suggest the uncertain basis of all established criteria of normal conduct. The same disquieting uncertainty haunts the pages of her brother's "Pensées."

We cannot give much reflection to the spiritual in its relation to the visible life without realizing that the limit within which

* Cf. Pascal, "Pensées," art. ix. "Les Saints ont leur empire, leur éclat, leurs victoires, leur lustre, et n'ont nul besoin des grandeurs charnelles ou spirituelles, où elles n'ont nul rapport, car elles n'y ajoutent ni ôtent. Ils sont vus de Dieu et les anges, et non des corps ni des esprits curieux: Dieu leur suffit.'

we are accustomed to hedge our idea of possibility is a wholly artificial one,* but the theory of the normal, from which the average rule of life is constructed, is infinitely more narrowing than these criteria of possibility, for it is inextricably confused with our conception of the expedient, and we force the one to conform to the other until we lose the power of differentiating betwixt the two. Hence the deep but unrealized difficulty of attaining the point of view of Blaise Pascal—that point of view which he expressed, but to which, in its deepest spiritual aspect, his sister was his pioneer. The thing itself, not the accepted idea of it, was his material for thought. It has been said of him that his thought stirred the world of phenomena—the world of things unseen—but that no phenomenon conceivable could affect the ascending progress of his thought.† In the tremendous directness in motive and in method thus indicated, we find the keynote for any study of Jacqueline Pascal.

The logic that actuated the Pascals is like the keenest of stilettos, against which the comfortable mantle of accepted tradition affords no semblance of protection. At its approach the safest and most usual course is to turn and flee; a bolder course brings inevitable retribution, and the master-mind that is the occasion of the peril is the first to admit its awfulness. Surrender means agony, and the terms of peace are never known till the surrender is absolute; yet Pascal will soften nothing, the anguish is the only guide to the remedy, and must be borne. As he suffers he vindicates the necessity of suffering in a manner peculiar to himself. His sayings solve all that is difficult of understanding in his conduct, and when we turn to contemplate his sister's strange development, we find its fittest commentary and its explanation in a single phrase of his: "Il est juste qu'un Dieu si pur ne se découvre qu'à ceux dont le cœur est purifié." ‡

It is hard to follow Jacqueline Pascal, even distantly, because the light that led her is not commonly beheld even by those who seek the path she trod. It might have been given to her to say

* Cf. F. Grainger, "Soul of a Christian," p. 8.

† A. Vinet, "Etudes sur Pascal." ‡ "Pensées," art vii. No. 18.

with S. Augustine : "I entered with Thee for guide into the depths of my soul." She prayed for light in the chapel at Port-Royal, but even before those prayers were uttered, and before she could inhale the spiritual atmosphere that surrounded Angélique and Agnès, she had been penetrated by an intellectual conviction of the fallacy of human desire and human ambition. It seems as if the acceptance of traditional standards became impossible to her. Self-renunciation was less deliberate than necessary ; she was impelled to it because she had entered into the depths of her soul—"that innermost soul where grace is sometimes hidden," of which la Mère Agnès wrote,* and became so saturated with the consciousness of God that thenceforward the things of life dwindled to worthlessness.

Human conditions impose certain principles of duty that are themselves based on the experience of the majority. It is an illusive basis, for the experience of the majority is infinitely hard to gauge; nevertheless, from it springs the standard whereby we judge the individual. Even according to the maxims of Port-Royal, the conduct of Jacqueline Pascal would be found wanting. She ran counter to the written teaching of Saint-Cyran and of la Mère Angélique. She does not furnish an example. Nevertheless, she justifies herself, and unconsciously proclaims the power of individuality to dominate the forces that we term environment.† For the rule that provides for every contingency awaiting ordinary travellers cannot be held as binding on him who ventures in regions that are unexplored; the saint, like the man of genius, must scandalize more than he can edify, for it is the attribute of greatness to be careless of the trammels of uniformity, and to assert his right to the strength of that isolation, of which he must needs endure the bitterness.

It is not an exaggerated estimate that claims greatness for Jacqueline Pascal. If we can realize the conditions of her life and the unaggressive determination with which she met them,

* See above, p. 292.

† Cf. A. Vinet : "Tout homme, bon gré mal gré a son individualité, mais tout homme n'a pas de l'individualité ; ("Etudes sur Pascal," Preface).

we are forced to recognize in her a quality that lifts her above the range of ordinary judgment. In that first visit to Paris her whole soul had become possessed with passionate eagerness to make the religious life her own. It was obedience that arrested the fulfilment of desire. M. Singlin bade her wait until she had received her father's consent; and M. Pascal was not only obdurate in his refusal, but would not countenance any intercourse between his daughter and Port-Royal. Accordingly, Jacqueline returned to the home-life of a pious household that had seemed satisfying and happy before she went to Paris. To many there would have been peril in the atmosphere of quiet piety. The strong sense of vocation could not reconcile itself with the heedless frivolity that prevailed in most homes of the period, and the pressure of difficulties would stimulate its possessor to constant watchfulness. The vocation of many a Port-Royal nun was deepened thus by delay, and response to the test demanded considerable courage. But Jacqueline Pascal was called to an ordeal of more insidious danger. Port-Royal, under obedience, was left behind. She had been told that her first duty was to her father, and he required absolutely nothing of her that could offend her conscience. She desired a life of service, and he asked nothing better than that she should devote herself to the good of others (he being included among the recipients of her benefits), for it would appear that he was easily reconciled to his daughter remaining single, but his antagonism to Port-Royal was impregnable.

The sequel which he probably expected would have been a very natural one. Divided from the source of that tremendous influence which for a time had dominated her, and fully occupied in self-devoted labour, the life of Mlle. Pascal might have become so strong a centre of happiness and comfort to those about her, that unconsciously it would have grown satisfying to herself. She had, it would seem, a charming personality; she was one of those who are forced to realize their own capacity of influence, and seldom fail to see the harvest where they have sown the grain. In such an one the vocation that means withdrawal from the

world is a perplexing subject of reflection, an outrageous thing to minds that repudiate the reality of that compelling impulse which is termed vocation. Yet the absolute reality of a vocation can never be so vigorously demonstrated as by the soul that does violence to itself by obeying its impulse to the evident detriment of others, and in the experience of Jacqueline Pascal it seems as though no detail of the tragedy were lost.

"Ne vous laissez pas abattre, ma chère sœur," wrote Angélique to one who was forced to live at the Polish Court when her heart was at Port-Royal, "mais faisant usage de la grâce de Dieu soyez Religieuse où vous êtes. Ce n'est ni le lieu ni l'habit qui la fait être véritable, mais la pratique fidèle de l'humilité, de l'obéissance, de la charité et de la mortification des sens."* The passage as it stands is the best commentary on the life of Jacqueline Pascal ere she was allowed to wear the veil. Her keen perception grasped at once the full difficulty of the life that lay before her. There was the possibility of quiet waiting till the door should open for the full dedication of herself; the interval might have been full of happiness in the knowledge of the blessing that her presence brought to others, and of innocent delights accepted in a spirit of detachment. The records left by Mme. Perier are so intimate that the life of the Pascal home becomes a reality to us to-day. We know that Jacqueline was deeply affectionate, and that her father's devotion and the intellectual and spiritual sympathy betwixt herself and Blaise combined to offer her the most satisfying form of happiness; and yet had she accepted it there would not assuredly have been any lack of the pain inseparable from a life of service. The life of waiting, with its sweetness and its sorrow, had been understood by Saint-Cyran with peculiar vividness. Its claim on obedience, its lessons in patience and in humility, seemed to him to have a special value; the years spent in the world in intercourse that required perpetual self-government, demanded a distinctive vocation as directly God-given as that to the cloister.† But that—

* "Lettres," vol. ii. No. 712 (see above, p. 301).

† Cf. "Lettres Spirituelles de Saint-Cyran," vol. i. No. 29.

beautiful as it often was—was not the vocation of Jacqueline Pascal.

It seems that there must have been betwixt her and Blaise, a wonderful affinity of temperament, but Blaise, with the greater genius, had the artist-nature more developed. He was profoundly moved by the same influence that had engrossed his sister, but the delight of intellectual freedom, of employing powers which were a perpetual source of amazement to his compeers, lured him back to bear a part among those vanities of the world for which Port-Royal had no tolerance. To Jacqueline was given a knowledge of the danger. She too had the vivid mind that can touch moments of pure and absolute enjoyment, but she knew that intellectual intoxication may be as limitless in the range of its result as even its animal counterpart. She had an intuition that the cup which others might be permitted—might even be required—to sip, would be poisonous to her (and that the intuition was true was proved to some degree by her brother's subsequent career), and she chose to set it aside. Her experience of life had not disappointed or disgusted her; she had been fortunate in personal endowment and external surroundings. It was, therefore, not in violent revolt, but in the most absolute simplicity, that she adopted the conditions of which Mme. Perier has left us a description.

"Because she had renounced the world in her heart," says the chronicle, "she was no longer able to take pleasure in amusements as she had done hitherto. Thus, though she took great pains to hide her intention of dedicating herself to God, it was none the less quite evident, and, seeing that it could not be hidden, without more ado she withdrew by degrees from company, and completely changed all her habits. She had a very good opportunity for so doing, for my father changed his place of residence just at that time; thus she found herself in absolute liberty to live in solitude, and she found this life so congenial that little by little she withdrew even from family intercourse, so that she remained all day alone in her own room. This does not mean that she refused entrance to me or to any one else, nor that she ever refused to talk, but that when one turned to topics that

were unessential, it was plain that it wearied her so much that one avoided giving her such annoyance as much as possible." Her retirement was not of the kind that prevented her from working among the poor, and she plied her needle energetically to clothe the shivering. She was the devoted nurse of her sister's children, moreover, and when any real need occurred, was absolutely at the service of Mme. Perier herself. But though under obedience, she was absolutely resigned to remaining beneath her father's roof till he should consent to her leaving him, she never, after her return from Paris and Port-Royal, accepted the familiar life of every day to which she had formerly brought such zest and enjoyment.

Every month the nuns of Port-Royal were given subjects for meditation; these la Mère Agnès sent to Mlle. Pascal in her exile, and she would note some of the reflections they suggested. Their simplicity does not lessen their significance, and the writer's life, read by the light of those reflections, is their best and truest commentary. In all the literature that proceeded from Port-Royal there is nothing—for those who bring understanding to it—more distinctive of the spirit that prevailed among the nuns themselves than the writings of Jacqueline Pascal. They are so full of meaning that selection is hard; they seize, as it were, on a familiar fact, and press it into a new guise that of itself arrests and holds attention.

"Jesus died in reality, not merely in intention or by a symbol:" that, for instance, is truth so familiar that it has ceased to claim the thought of the individual; but Jacqueline drew from it a lesson for herself.* "This teaches me," she said, "that I must really die to the world, and not content myself in this with vague dreams and theories." In her contemplation of the weariness involved in the living of the Perfect Human Life, and in the actual bodily pain that ended it, she heard the voice that summoned her from innocent delight to brand the cross with its honour and its agony on every faculty.

"Faisant usage de la grace de Dieu soyez Religieuse où vous

* "Le Mystère de la Mort de Notre Seigneur Jesus Christ" (see Faugère, "Jacqueline Pascal").

êtes," wrote Angélique. But she had not had opportunity to test the meaning of the charge she gave; nor would its realization have been possible in the degree to which it was realized in that quiet home in the Auvergne, by any one whose individuality was less clearly defined. By the grace of God Jacqueline Pascal was summoned from those ordinary avocations which others may be required to fulfil, and consecrate in their fulfilment. In those wonderful weeks when her whole being was, as it were, saturated with the influence of Port-Royal, there awoke in her a sense of the necessity of continual prayer, which would have made the moderate practices expedient for the many from whom similar patience was demanded, appear to her as a denial of response. She was as sensitive to distraction as to sin itself. Her spiritual vision was extraordinarily clear; she knew that she had been blessed beyond the ordinary lot, and it seemed to her that to risk dimming her marvellous faculty was to show herself unworthy of its possession. The direct sequence of her theory and practice compels belief in her sincerity.

Saint-Cyran put into words the ideal of the prayer of the religious, and his rendering seems to lift the aspirations of Jacqueline Pascal from vagueness into coherence. The peculiar imagery adopted by Saint-Cyran differs from that in use among the mystic writers, because he never enlarges on its meaning, and his curtness in this particular adds force to his sayings, even if it lessens their lucidity. "Prayer is the channel that unites the heart of a religious to that of God, which is His Spirit," he says; "it is by this that she may draw the waters of Heaven, which rise and descend from us to God, and from God to us by means of this spiritual channel, which is prayer. All that is done in religion, even eating and sleeping, is prayer, when we do it simply in the order required of us, without adding or taking away by our caprices and vain whims. If we are simple in this, that is to say, in obeying the whole rule in letter and in spirit, when the time comes for us to present ourselves alone before God in that which we term prayer, the mere abiding of our spirit before His, and the presence of His with us is prayer, whether we may have beautiful

and inspiring thoughts or not. It is only necessary that in simplicity, without attempting any violent mental effort, we hold ourselves before Him with the desire of love in our whole soul, and without other voluntary thought, and then all the time that we are on our knees will be held as prayer before God, who accepts the humble endurance of involuntary distractions as freely as the finest aspirations we can formulate. For one of the most excellent forms of prayer is the uplifting of the heart in love, and the suffering of such things as displease us. It is thus joined to the patience which is the first of virtues. And the soul which thus lifts itself humbly from its place of prayer must feel that it has prayed as truly as though it had suffered no distraction.

"To be thus resigned is the greatest mark of simplicity and also of love towards God, of whom one asks without desiring to constrain His response except in the degree and time that pleases Him. He delights in the prayer of a soul who is thus simple and humble and submissive to His will. It is of the simplicity of such a soul that it may be said, 'If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light,' that is to say, every good work that thou doest in Religion throughout the day after such a prayer will be acceptable to Him to whom thou prayest, and full of His Divine light, which is invisible and intangible. For it happens often that when we think we have grace and light we have not got it, and have it when we think we have it not. Therefore it is folly to seek so anxiously for satisfaction in prayer; we may be deceived when we think it has been given to us, or we may receive it unconsciously, the working of the Holy Spirit in prayer being altogether inferior, and often not understood by the soul itself. It seems to me that it is enough to be present thus before God, and to act as I have described.

"We should be in the presence of God as a vessel, open and exposed before God, when we pray that He may instil His grace little by little, according to His will, being almost as content to return empty, because that is His will, as if He had filled us. It never happens that God does not instil this Heavenly water in the end, if we offer ourselves often with this faith, and this detachment

from desire ; and often we believe ourselves to have gone away empty when, even though we are unconscious of it, we are full of the Spirit of God.

"The path of the Son of God, when He enters to abide with us, is not known to us, since the Scripture says that we know not whence He cometh nor whither He goeth. It is enough that we realize that we have received Him by showing Him forth every day in the place where we dwell to serve Him, and that we feel ourselves in the course of weeks or months stronger than we were, without knowing how or when this strength was given to us. Assuredly it could not have come except by prayer, and by the constant offering of our heart to God, that we have made at the times specially assigned to us for prayer. In like manner, we do not see the growing of a tree nor of a man when we can look at them from morning until night, but are astonished to realize that they have grown, when they have done daily that which God ordains for growth." *

Long as is this exposition, it will not admit of abbreviation. It contains, indeed, as close a rendering of the mysterious ideal of the true religious as can be suggested in simple phraseology. Saint-Cyran wrote to a young girl, a novice of the Order of the Visitation, but he was writing for the many who have gleams of light, and yet lack understanding of what the light may mean, and for the few besides, to whom the light burns steadily, but who know not how to set it where it can illumine all their lives. It was prayer as thus depicted that was the dominant desire of Jacqueline Pascal, the uninterrupted prayer of the religious, the channel whereby the hearts of men are united to the Spirit of God. If we pause to ponder on the full meaning of Saint-Cyran's words, the inevitableness of the path she chose becomes apparent. Possessed by the understanding of that wondrous prayer as only a few even of those who knelt in choir-stalls could be, she could not slip back into the so-called normal life of trivial interests and harmless intercourse. The revelation was too strong for choice. Her brilliant qualities only made the holocaust the less unworthy.

* "Lettres Spirituelles de Saint-Cyran," vol. i. No. 85 (January, 1641).

The delight of understanding and of creating meant a measure of detraction from the one delight that should absorb desire, and to dim the ideal for an instant was to sin against the light. "L'homme se remplit des personnes et des choses dont il s'occupe," said de Rancé. "Plus le monde a de place dans ses pensées et dans ses actions moins il en donne à Dieu." * To the Pascals the world might mean a world that was dominated by intellect, to Jacqueline individually it might offer boundless opportunity of helpfulness, but with as clear a realization as that of Le Maistre himself of what it offered, she might have echoed that curious saying of his, "Je m'étonne de la grandeur de ma vocation." It was an irresistible force to them both, and therefore to them both it was given to proclaim "the folly of the cross" in defiance of the misunderstanding of the world.

After the death at Port-Royal de Paris of la Sœur de S. Euphémie, who had once been Jacqueline Pascal, la Mère Agnès said, writing of her to her brother Blaise: "God revealed to her the mystery of the humility of Jesus Christ, and gave her grace to make entire renunciation of all that was most admirable in her, using it only to make her more humble than others could be who had less knowledge of God and of themselves than she had." † That is the peculiar point in her vocation. It shines with the same vividness as a literary or artistic genius, compelling attention, not as a thing that can voluntarily be copied, but as a fact not within the range of human explanation. The knowledge of God and of one's self (which, according to S. Augustine, comprises the whole duty of man) was given to her as it is given to very few. In the manner of her life before she was admitted to Port-Royal, in her methods of dealing with the children of whom she had especial care, and in the circumstances of her death, she gave proof of a spiritual sensitiveness as rare as the extraordinary intellectual receptivity of Blaise; and it may be claimed for either quality equally that it was especially a gift of God, and set its possessor beyond the pale of the rules of expediency designed for ordinary persons.

* "Lettres," No. 223 (see Introduction, p. xx.).

† "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," vol. i. No. 350.

Probably Jacqueline was not conscious of any sensation of loss when she withdrew from society, but Port-Royal demanded a still more costly sacrifice before she was allowed to enter there. The desire for expression which, whether by sound or by words, or by form and colour, is the dominating force of an artist-nature, was inherent in her. She was required to quench it absolutely. "M. Singlin says that a religious must not work from vanity," wrote la Mère Agnès, with reference to a literary undertaking; "that it is better that you should work from time to time solely as an occupation. A nun had better hide that talent than employ it, for God will not call her to give account for it, humility and silence being the portion of our sex." *

The ordinance would have been less severe if Jacqueline had had the compensations of the religious life, but truly her four years of waiting demanded self-abnegation of the most comprehensive kind. She relinquished all that makes the sweetness of domestic life, and she checked the instincts whose satisfaction brings the purest happiness possible on earth. For her this last was a supreme venture of faith, for she lost, not only the individual pleasure of intellectual pursuits, but the intimacy with her brother which had seemed among the most precious of God's gifts to her. The passing of the months drew Jacqueline and Blaise in opposite directions, and it may have seemed that the extreme practices of the one went far to induce the process of reaction in the other. Blaise became involved in the interests and pleasures of the world —under conditions of refinement and self-restraint unusual at that period, it is true, but to a degree that was incompatible with the theories of M. Singlin. Therefore the two, who had entered together on a new world of thought and aspiration, were speedily divided by that very likeness of temperament which made half-measures impossible to either; and when M. Pascal died, Jacqueline awoke to the fact that her brother's opposition to her vocation was no less strenuous than her father's had been. The discovery was hardly less painful because she felt that the deference she had paid to the latter could not be claimed for

* "Lettres de la Mère Agnès," vol. i. No. 113.

the former. She went secretly to the Faubourg S. Jacques to avoid contention, in January, 1652; but she did not disguise that her joy in going was shadowed by misgivings regarding the brother who had held so large a place in her life. She wrote to him from Port-Royal, and her confidence in her vocation does not dull the pathos of her appeal for some token of his love and sympathy.

"Without ceasing I desire your approval, I ask for it with all the love that is in my heart, not as a means towards fulfilment, for it is not required for that, but to make fulfilment joyful, to give me peace of mind and tranquillity, for that it is absolutely necessary; and without it the most fortunate and most glorious event of my life, will be accomplished with a mingling of great pain in its great joy, and in an agitation of heart so unworthy of so great a grace that I cannot believe you would be so unfeeling as to resolve to cause me so much suffering.

"If I dared, I think I would make you a confession of my whole life that we might have a clearer understanding of God's mercy towards me; but it is needless if you will let your mind go back a moment to the time when I loved the world and when the knowledge and love of God that I possessed made me only the more guilty; when I divided my heart betwixt two masters with an inequality that overwhelms me with shame, especially when I remember that your remonstrance failed to convince me that I could not unite two elements so opposed as are the spirit of the world and the spirit of piety. I end abruptly because I should have so much to say about my debt of gratitude to you, and that which you and I owe to God, not only in the ordinary sense as His creatures, but also specially, that I should write a book rather than a letter." *

The letter (though it was fruitless in its immediate purpose) reveals the depth of real intimacy that had once existed between the brother and sister, and the searching bitterness of their estrangement to the heart of Jacqueline. Blaise must have steeled himself against her to good purpose if he was unmoved

* March 7, 1652 (see "Lives" by Victor Cousin and Faugère).

by all the tender suggestion of that "you and I;" and Jacqueline, finding him obdurate to an appeal wrung from her inmost soul, realized that the call of Christ was to mean to her acceptance of the sharpest suffering that the conditions of her life permitted. Perhaps it had seemed to her in that long waiting in Auvergne that she had learnt the whole meaning of self-immolation, and this closer touch of unexpected agony was needed to reveal the scope of absolute abandonment.

She had recorded the whole history of her ordeal by fire with the intent of disclosing her own weakness and the strength that she derived from la Mère Angélique, and the chronicle is a valuable testimony to the character of each. A question of money, altogether practical and sordid, was the source of difficulty. M. Pascal had left his property in shares among his children; it could not immediately be realized, and if Jacqueline was professed before the moment of division, it would be possible to deprive her of her inheritance. As she expresses it, her brother and M. Perier "prirent les choses dans un esprit tout seculier," and made it plain that they would recognize no claim but that of the law. She had to choose betwixt two alternatives—to be received at Port-Royal empty-handed, or to wait in the world till her property was in her own power. She laid the question before Angélique, and the response was unhesitating and decisive. Assuredly the sin of avarice was no temptation to the Mother-Abbess, and she and la Mère Agnès had recognized Jacqueline as being one with the community long before she was free to wear the veil. M. Singlin was more disposed to hesitation; he seems to have feared that Angélique's disinterestedness might exceed the furthest bounds of prudence; and when Mlle. Pascal expressed a desire to come as lay-sister, as she came empty-handed, he did not repudiate the suggestion. But the position which she adopted finally was more to the honour of Port-Royal; she was bidden to make it evident to her kinsfolk "that worldly goods were not sufficiently important to be a reason for delay in the entire and solemn consecration of a soul to God."

There was no affectation in the indifference of the Arnauld

sisters to the temporal wealth of Mlle. Pascal, but to the girl herself the thought that she came as a beggar, when she would have desired to have enriched the beloved community, was unutterably bitter. She was a novice at Port-Royal de Paris when the grasping intentions of her kinsfolk were so clearly stated as to admit no further possibility of doubt, and it chanced that Angélique was at the other house. When the latter returned, according to custom, the noviciate assembled to greet her, and Jacqueline burst into tears, declaring that she alone was unhappy. The real wisdom and strength in dealing with others which were possessed by the Mother-Abbess were made evident at such moments. The element of passion beneath his self-restraint, which was so marked in the character of Blaise Pascal, existed in that of his sister also: the wound dealt her had gone deep, and there was at least a possibility that its effect might poison the pure beauty of her after-life. Her conscious need was sympathy. It was her heart that suffered; the love and loyalty she had lavished through all her years of girlhood seemed to be angrily rejected by the object she had held most worthy. Sympathy is the salve that we offer a sore heart by instinct, but it was not sympathy that the Mother-Abbess offered to her novice. She told her that she held her to be honoured, because, by this trial, the Hand of God had definitely broken the last links that withheld her from complete allegiance to Himself.

"I answered her, weeping," writes Jacqueline, "that it seemed to me I was already so far detached that I did not need this affliction. 'It is God's will to show you that you were mistaken in thinking so,' she said to me, 'for if it had been so, you would have accepted all that has happened with an indifference very unlike your present distress.'" In fact, Angélique judged rightly that a strata of sensitive pride, hitherto unsuspected in the girl's deep nature, had been touched by the probing of this experience, and that her future depended on her realization of the lesson it was intended to convey. In her long perseverance in self-imposed privation, Jacqueline had convinced herself and those about her that she did indeed "covet suffering."

The absolute sincerity of her nature seemed to preclude the possibility of any mistake; self-will had abdicated the ruling of her life, and each day's routine was a silent witness to her dedication. In human eyes she had seemed to be innocent of any desire that was not holy, but the purposes of God for her exacted the endurance of a chastening fire that no human ordinance could have imposed, and, by the aid of Angélique, she emerged from it prepared for as close fulfilment of the ideal of the religious as is permitted to the denizens of an imperfect world. In the moment of her trial she and Angélique were very close in spirit; the experience of the latter in her own inner conflicts served her in guidance, doubtless; yet the nature of Jacqueline Pascal differed so greatly from her own, that her dealings with her suggest the thought of inspiration. She saw the root of the girl's grief, and would not for a moment accept her assertion that it lay chiefly in the loss to the community.

"To prove to you that you are thinking far more of yourself than of the injustice imposed upon us," she said sagaciously, "consider that you would not be equally distressed if we received like treatment from other causes. . . . Understand, my sister, you had small difficulty in renouncing the world, God having given you grace to recognize the vanity and emptiness of all its dissipations and amusements which allure and fascinate other young girls. You are not better on that account, for it is God who has given you the grace. Assuredly you have arrived at great detachment, but two things you withheld, of which it was necessary to deprive you. One was the worldly goods you were to dedicate to religion, the other that wealth of intimate love and sympathy which had so united your family that you seemed to hold all things in common, and in which you rested without being conscious of it. And God has chosen to deprive you of both, to make you really poor in every sense, more so in affection than possessions. You see that God requires more detachment of you." And then, with a backward glance to the actual loss incurred by the community, Angélique gave a word of comfort after her own fashion. "The loss of the smallest grace of God," said she, "is

a thousand times heavier in His eyes than that of all the wealth of the world. No one gives a thought to that, however. They are scarcely troubled if they slip away from their practice of humility or gentleness or any other virtue. And they are conscience-stricken if they have wasted a little money, which is the least of all the gifts for which God calls us to account."

Thus, tested and trained by just that pain to which she was still sensitive, Jacqueline Pascal was fitted for profession. And when the purposes of God had been accepted, and she had learnt to yield her will completely, the great demand that had taxed her so sorely at the first was withdrawn.

It is difficult to refer briefly to the spiritual development of Blaise Pascal, yet it is impossible, even in a superficial survey of his sister's life, to ignore it utterly. It is a strange and significant fact that his extraordinary powers produced little of permanent value during the years that he was surrounded by the adulation of the intellectual world. The wide field of learning that gave such ample scope to others did not stimulate him to accomplishment. It seems as if his capacity for affecting others was held in abeyance till he turned towards that light of revelation which had dawned once upon him unsought, but from which he had deliberately withdrawn himself. But his capitulation, when the hour for it was ripe, was complete in proportion to the gifts that were his to yield. "Thenceforward religion for him became a passion, and thus had power to dominate and to compel. His logical faculty became only the keener and the more severe, but it also was touched with passion; and these two qualities, each in its extreme, produced the matchless combination of the 'Pensées.'" * The years of Pascal's life had been years of continual and serious thought; there was nothing sensual about him, and the strain of physical suffering had had no power to dim his faculties. But the mystery that awaited him as the end of every train of reasoning and thought grew more and more baffling. It is said that in his "Pensées" he forestalled arguments that had never yet been urged against his faith, and sounded depths of scepticism hitherto

* A. Vinet, "Etudes."

unsuspected. Yet the solution of all that baffled him in his experience of the realms both of action and of reason, lay in the faith that, when he found it, "became for him a passion." And its first result was a claim upon his actual life no less cogent than that which it had made upon his sister's. It was the greatest gift conceivable, and it was one which demanded preparation from the recipient. "Il est juste qu'un Dieu si pur ne se découvre qu'à ceux dont le cœur est purifié."

The volume of the "Pensées" is a supreme protest against trifling, against an idea of Religion as compatible with easy-going practices. Therefore it is justly held to be the great expression of that which we have found to be the spirit of Port-Royal, and it has the same element of tragedy of which we are always conscious where we touch the spiritual life of the Port-Royalists. The sublime indifference of the mystic is not the note of the "Pensées." Pascal had looked on life, and saw it as "an abyss of sin and ignorance and error," and the terror of his realization of life may be said to make his realization of redemption terrible, by reason of its immensity.* Self-knowledge opened to him the knowledge of other souls, and he understood the meaning of temptation from personal experience as well as from observation. He had been absorbed by the study of human nature before the moment came for his soul to prove itself stronger than his intellect. It cannot be said that the light of religion satisfied all his cravings and quieted his uncertainties, because he remained persistently unsatisfied; but he attributed the dimness of his vision to that unworthiness and human weakness which has kept men blind and deaf since the days when the disciples listened to the voice of Christ Himself, yet failed to understand. The closing years of his life were marked by self-discipline that had the fierce intensity we connect with de Rancé and the Trappists. Not only physically, but mentally and spiritually, it was searching and unsparing, yet to the last he did not even approach his standard of "ceux dont le cœur est purifié."

In looking back to that period during which Jacqueline had

* See Dean Church, "Pascal and other Sermons."

been knit closer and closer month by month to the inner life of Port-Royal, and he had slipped gradually and surely out of its range of influence, he regarded himself as having been so touched by "the contagion of the world's slow stain" that clear reflection of the light invisible could not be possible to him. And this impression, expressed continually in the "Pensées," explains, and in some sort justifies, the tragic element inseparable from every thought of him. The religion that is a passion should be characterized by joy and triumph, but the vivid realization of himself, the growth of which in Pascal seems to have corresponded with his realization of the personality of Christ, was too strong to permit him at first to find peace in the conviction that had overwhelmed him. And before he could reach the further and higher development he died.

At the present time such minds as can appreciate the scope of the intellectual capacity of Blaise Pascal will probably have most perception of the worth of his humility. But to the unlearned, to whom the position of Pascal among philosophers is a thing to be taken on trust, the story of his coming to Port-Royal has a peculiar pathos. For he came as a returned prodigal. He had been a cherished son of the house, and he had voluntarily ranged himself among its enemies, transgressing the laws of honour and equity that he might profit to its detriment. For such the hour of return must of necessity be very bitter.

"He came to see me, and was very open with me," wrote Jacqueline to Mme. Perier, "so much so that I was full of pity for him. He owned to me that, amid all his many occupations, and among all the things which led him to love the world, and to which there was every reason to believe he was greatly attached, he was so drawn to leave it all by an extreme aversion to frivolity and dissipation, and by the constant reproaches of his conscience, that he found himself in far greater detachment than he had ever approached before. . . . Little by little I have seen him grow until I hardly know him, and especially in humility, in submission, in diffidence and self-repression, and in the wish to be oblivious of the praise and recognition of mankind. This is what

he is at the present moment. Only God can know what he will one day become." *

When Jacqueline was writing, the community had already been made famous by the miracles; but she, as she dwelt on her brother's desire for oblivion, had little idea of the glory that his pen was to win for himself and for Port-Royal. We have no record of her impression of the "Lettres Provinciales," and the "Pensées," as we know them, can never have been in her hands. It was the human Pascal who came so close to her, but in the "Lettres Provinciales" we find an echo of her spirit as clearly as in the "Pensées." For a certain violence of thought was shared by brother and sister, and the partisanship that in Blaise found vent in his violent attack upon the Jesuits had so deep a root in Jacqueline that the misfortunes of her party broke her heart. She died of grief because, her faith in the truths she had learned at Port-Royal being unshakeable, the fact of the persecution of the Port-Royalists seemed to cast a shadow on the Church.†

The idea of obedience to authority which she cherished became incompatible with a refusal to sign the formula, yet to sign it was tantamount to a denial of confidence in those whose words and influence had changed her life, and she was incapable of banishing a problem from her mind because it troubled her. Its satisfactory solution was impossible, and the importance of the issues involved in it proved literally overwhelming to a being so sensitive, both spiritually and intellectually, as she was. And for this she died, for it was never questioned that a broken heart was the true reason of her death. She was, in a sense, a martyr for her faith, yet her death must be regarded as a natural one, because it was inevitable. We cannot conceive of her as living calmly on in such a conflict as raged about her sisters in the months that followed the death of la Mère Angélique. Detachment in her had touched the boundary of self-effacement, but she was rich in love which she had lavished on the community and on the Church, and at the suggestion of conflict betwixt the two she shrank in a terror so great that it carried her into the peace that can only lie beyond the grave for a nature such at hers.

* January 25, 1655. † Faugère, "Vie de Jacqueline Pascal."

CHAPTER XIV

WITHIN THE CONVENT WALLS

It is possible that such a death as that of Jacqueline Pascal, if it were brought home to us in actual experience, would wear an aspect of far deeper tragedy than it assumed to those who were the companions of her daily life. The mind of the true Port-Royal nun was fixed on the idea of death to a degree which baffles all attempts at clear realization of her standpoint. The logical result of renunciant life is to regard death as S. Paul regarded it,* and that result seems to have been attained by many of those who dwelt at Port-Royal. It is a suggestive fact, to which some of these devotees bore witness, that the closest sympathy and influence with youth was possessed by those whose thoughts were most fixed on the Unseen, but there is, in truth, no food for wonder at the evident affinity betwixt the unsullied mind of a child and the soul of Jacqueline Pascal.

The truest picture of the hidden life of the Port-Royal nuns may be gleaned from the regulations drawn up by la Sœur de S. Euphémie for guidance in the care of the children with which she was entrusted as soon as she was professed,† for it would be hard to find a more characteristic summary of the claim of Port-Royal upon conduct; while throughout, as an under-current, there is the realization, no less characteristic, of the weakness and frailty of human nature and the danger of excessive strain. Even the children must learn to cling to nothing, remembering that the lesson which is the most distasteful to themselves will make the best offering to God. The upward glance towards the inspiration

* "Mihi autem vivere Christus est mori autem lucrum."

† See A. Vinet, "Etudes sur Pascal."

of all good is to be their habit as much in their play as in their work; there must be no reservation, nothing hidden because too sweet to be renounced, "nevertheless, one must be careful to avoid excess, and not to attempt to make them too spiritual, being so young." *

The sisters at Port-Royal contrived to maintain the strict rule and discipline imposed upon the children, and yet to win their love and make them happy. It was no small achievement. They were with their charges continually, and no misdoings were overlooked, yet the wear and tear of this hourly association only fostered mutual love. Perhaps the explanation may be found in the direction given by la Sœur de S. Euphémie to the sisters-in-charge. "We cannot pray or humble ourselves or watch ourselves too much if we would acquit ourselves of our duty to the children, seeing that it is given us under obedience. And I see that it is one of the most important offices of the community, and we cannot be too anxious in fulfilling it, not, however, slipping into cowardice, but putting all our trust in God. For we must always regard these little souls as sacred loans to us from God, of which we shall be called to give account. Therefore we should speak less to them, than to God for them." In those words we find the familiar echo of Saint-Cyran's teaching, and Jacqueline Pascal among her pensionnaires was fulfilling just the ideal that had always seemed the highest, in his conception of vocation.

It was, indeed, a most natural outcome of the depth of the thought that pervaded Port-Royal that the necessity of training young minds should present itself as a more pressing duty than that of influencing those that were already mature. This necessity affected the destiny of Port-Royal because the movement that resulted from it appeared to the Jesuits as a trespass on their special province, but it also gave an opportunity for the expression of the sentiments of Saint-Cyran and his followers towards the problems of existence that must, without it, have been withheld.

"I would that you could see in my heart the love of children

* See Faugère, "Vie de Jacqueline Pascal."

that reigns there," * wrote Saint-Cyran from Vincennes; and he proceeded to record a scheme that he had hoped to carry out before his arrest whereby he might benefit these objects of his love, and at the same time serve that other object that was so near his heart: the purification of the priesthood. He intended to establish a training-school for six boys chosen in Paris, "in such manner as it should please God to send them to me," he says characteristically. His captivity frustrated his design, but the celebrated schools of Port-Royal are in some degree an interpretation of it.

It was a fact undeniable by any thoughtful and observant person that the social corruption of the period infected the children before they were able to reason, and every system which permitted them to herd together without adequate supervision was necessarily productive of immeasurable evil consequences. The theory of the schools of Port-Royal was similar to that which forms the basis of the educational system of the Jesuits, that the children should be taught to hate sin before they encountered it, and have acquired a firm hold of the weapons of defence before they were called upon to use them; † the actual method was much the same as that employed by Jacqueline Pascal to attain a somewhat different end: the close association that wins sympathy and the offering of a continual example of the virtues which the children were to put in practice.

The headquarters for the experiment was the village of Chernai, near Versailles, in a house belonging to M. de Bernières,‡ and given for the purpose. His own sons were placed there with others of the same social condition to the number of about twenty, most of them nine or ten years old, their "head-master" being M. Wallen de Beaupuis. The experiment was on a modest footing, but that did not exonerate it in the eyes of the Jesuits, who perceived how far-reaching might be the influence even of a score of minds saturated with the dangerous doctrine of Saint-Cyran.

* "Nécrologe de Port-Royal," vol. ii. p. 46. † Ibid., p. 49.

‡ Maitre des Requêtes.

The hermits lost their sacred charge * before their sisters were deprived, but the same fate was equally inevitable for both, because equally they met the difficulties of the most difficult of tasks in the same earnest spirit. The world was not prepared for this phase of their endeavour, any more than for any other manifestation of those convictions that forced them into action. The precepts instilled by nuns and hermits, as much in the play-ground as in the schoolroom, were in too violent contrast to the standards of society to be tolerated by the prudent, and therefore the revolutionary practices of the scholars of Port-Royal were suppressed, and the score of little boys who were to have carried the message of Port-Royal to a future generation were scattered to their respective homes.

M. de Sainte Marthe, who had devoted himself to the forming of their characters, commented on their removal in words that are specially characteristic. "Those from whose hands the children have been torn," he said, "should humble themselves before God. It may be that they were unworthy to help in so grand a work; it may be also that this generation is unworthy to witness the foundation of so great a good." † The under-current of self-distrust may be noted, for it is distinctive of the first generation of Port-Royalists, that of Le Maistre and de Saçi and de Sericourt. In a later time, when Arnauld and Nicole fought the world, we may look for it in vain, but where it is absent we cannot feel that the spirit of la Mère Angélique presided. The outlook of M. de Sainte Marthe and his methods with the children coincided with those prevailing in the convent; there is a true communion of thought between him and la Sœur de S. Euphémie and her predecessor in the arduous work assigned to her.

The miracle of the Sacred Thorn won celebrity for the convent schools of Port-Royal, and their sensational suppression established them more firmly in the memory of mankind than centuries of orderly existence. But, though there is a spurious cause for their celebrity, we cannot study the papers of Jacqueline Pascal already cited without realizing that their methods had the

* In 1656. † "Nécrologe de Port-Royal," vol. ii. p. 51.

truest of claims to veneration, and were based upon a habit of prayer that was absolutely free from any taint of convention or formalism. Those methods had grown slowly, and Jacqueline, though she expounded them so luminously, had not originated them. The work, as she took it up, was fresh from the fingers of Anne-Eugénie, the fourth of the Arnauld sisters, and in the life of Anne-Eugénie we find perhaps the nearest approach to a type of the unrecorded lives that gave the community its stability and strength. No uniformity of rule was sufficient to equalize the strong individuality of the nuns of Port-Royal. Nor did their loyalty to the leadership of Angélique produce any similarity of development even among the daughters of M. Arnauld. We have knowledge of la Mère Agnès and of Marie-Claire, and have seen the degree to which each stands alone in natural gifts and in experience. Differing from both, yet without in any way resembling the sister who was her chief object of devotion, we find in Anne-Eugénie a combination of qualities which fitted her to be the predecessor of Jacqueline Pascal in those peculiarly sacred duties to which each in turn was devoted.

Her vocation was hardly less definite than that of Jacqueline. She had been intended for the world, by her own choice as much as that of her parents. She had regarded the ardent piety of Marie-Claire—her junior by some years—with indulgent tolerance; she may have reflected on the forced dedication of Angélique with regret, and rejoiced that her own destiny afforded her other prospects. The ill-success of Catherine's marriage did not daunt her; she looked forward to a future containing as much happiness and success as had brightened her years of girlhood. It was an accepted fact that she should remain in the world, and her marriage was pending when one of those strong impressions, which it is impossible to disprove and difficult to explain, altered the course of her fortunes. The story may be told in the words of la Mère Angélique. "My sister Anne-Eugénie has told me a score of times, and has even written to me with her own hand, that when she was in the house of our late father, was twenty-two years old, and ready to be married, she had some inclination

towards retiring from the world and giving up the alliance that was suggested to her. And having gone to the Church of S. Merry with my late mother, to our chapel of S. Lawrence, as she attended at Mass and prayed, she felt herself of a sudden lifted out of herself, and led, as it were, in spirit into the presence of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and being on her knees before Him, He drew near to her and placed a ring upon her finger, giving her therewith so great a desire to be a religious that, having revealed it to le Père Archange * (the intimate friend of Mme. de Guise and my late mother), he judged it well to make many reasonable suggestions to turn her from her purpose, or at least to induce her to postpone it. He even spoke of the advantageous marriage that offered itself. Whereupon she answered, in these same words which she has often repeated to me : 'I do assure you, my father, that, supposing your great my lord de Guise was able and anxious to marry me, though I am only of humble condition, I would have none of him. I am claimed by a greater Lord than he.'

"And le Père Archange, seeing how firm she was, encouraged her to fulfil her purpose, even as she did. And all the rest of her life was very holy and in keeping with her miraculous and divine vocation, for in very truth she was a saint. And I cannot help saying that, so far as I can judge of the last two years of her life, it seemed evident to me that grace had destroyed human desire and had made the Spirit of God absolute sovereign in her being. And I only venture to say this because no one could have more intimate knowledge of her inmost heart and of her natural tendencies than I had." †

Of her, when death approached, Angélique wrote to their brother, Antoine Arnauld : "She is in a terrible condition of weakness and of complete joy ; it seems to me that she already feels herself in Heaven." ‡

It is not possible to trace any distinct human agency of influence in her development. Her summons had been direct

* Younger son of the Earl of Pembroke : see above, p. 48.

† "Relation de la Mère Angélique," Entretiens xviii.

‡ "Lettres," vol. ii. No. 56.

and not by the lips of man, and when, in the years of her noviciate, she experienced the blank despair of an intermediate stage when the things of this world were renounced and the joy of a fulfilled vocation had not been given to her, it was by interior patience and resolve rather than by outward consolation that she attained to that peace which afterwards was her assured possession. The fruit of her experience was an intuitive sympathy with others which marked her for the difficult post of novice-mistress. At Port-Royal she shared that responsibility with la Mère Agnès for a time ; and later, when la Mère Marie des Anges was Abbess of Maubuisson, she went thither to give assistance to a long-established mistress. She took with her the spirit of Angélique with regard to the religious rule, deepened by her own natural proclivities. She won the confidence of those with whom she came in contact even as did Angélique herself, and, like her, she deemed the interior life a more essential study than outward detail of conformity. She did not multiply reproofs, because she judged that, if the root were sound, the fruit of absolute submission and self-surrender was certain to declare itself, under the natural influence of the cloister. At Maubuisson this idea was regarded as a dangerous innovation, and even her personal humility was of no avail to soften the sharpness of the criticisms she incurred, therefore, to the regret of Marie des Anges, and, it may be imagined, of the noviciate, it was judged necessary that she should return to Port-Royal.

Her true external vocation awaited her there. The extraordinary faculty of sympathy which had revealed to her the true value either in the reserve or in the protestations of the novices, found a worthy field in the charge of the children of Port-Royal. It was given to her to realize the extreme seriousness and the extreme difficulty of the question of religious education for children. Not, it need hardly be said, in its controversial aspect, but as a matter of imparting mysteries, which baffle the understanding of the wisest, to minds whose receptiveness was in equal ratio with their inability to appreciate the true value of that which might be imparted to them. It must never be forgotten that the faith taught at Port-Royal was the Catholic faith as held

by the Church of Rome. Repeated accusations of heresy brought against them by their enemies have won for the whole community a reputation of independent thought, and of claiming freedom in belief which in its most modified form was only merited by one or two of its members. The Church demands belief which is not founded on comprehension, and compliance is less difficult to a child than to an older and more reasoning person, but the danger for the child is that it may accept where it cannot grasp, and being offered too much will fail in real retention of anything. Anne-Eugénie strove to nourish in her charges a sensation of awe. She would warn them beforehand that she had something very wonderful to communicate, and, while thus awakening their curiosity, would draw their attention to the sacredness of the promised knowledge by making them understand that as the time drew near they must not chatter about trivial things, or let their minds dwell on the idle topics they might glean in their intercourse with the world. And even with such preparation she told them very little at a time —the lessons of the life of Christ were not allowed to lose their message by growing too familiar before they were understood. The claims of the Faith could only be acknowledged one by one, and the mysteries of the sacraments were not lightly to be divulged to an unready mind.

She shared the life of her charges, not only leading their prayers and presiding over their lessons, but joining also in their games, to the astonishment of those who were most intimate with her, and knew the degree to which her religious vocation had alienated her from all forms of recreation.

The practice of the contemplative could not involve more absolute self-surrender than that of Anne-Eugénie. Angélique once assured the pensionnaires collectively that the charge of them was "une des plus pénibles obéissances de la religion," * and Anne-Eugénie had not the natural love for them that was inherent in Jacqueline Pascal. But, having once accepted their charge, she identified herself with them, even to the extent of doing penance for their misdeeds, and dedicating herself to continual intercession

* "Lettres," vol. i. No. 313.

on their behalf.* It is no matter for astonishment that the numbers of the pensionnaires augmented yearly, and that the charge and responsibility which afterwards devolved on Jacqueline Pascal was of infinite importance.

In questions of spiritual attainment comparisons are specially invidious. We recognize that Jacqueline Pascal stands separate from others, and that her death—a slow sinking beneath the weight of the world's shame—was the fitting close to a life of which we know no counterpart. Anne-Eugénie is not unique, but she is a pure type of a brave-hearted religious to whom her vocation is her greatest glory.

"Vous aurez appris hier que ma sœur Anne de l'Incarnation est aussi arrivée par la grace de Dieu à la fin de son voyage"—so wrote la Mère Angélique to Antoine Le Maistre in January, 1653.† The phrase bears its own quiet tribute to a consistent life; those who had been the companions of her journey knew that its end was welcome, and that any violent expressions of distress would be out of place. It was, perhaps, by a life such as hers, more attainable by the many than the high and difficult ascent to which Jacqueline Pascal was summoned, that the inner life of the convent profited most. Anne-Eugénie brought no broken spirit into religion, but the joyous heart that had made her life in the world glad to herself and others. "She did not become a religious till she was twenty-four," wrote Angélique, looking back over the years, "and from the moment when, as she heard Mass at S. Merry, God touched her, she advanced steadily. In the world she had all the success possible to an honest maiden. Her wit was celebrated, but God gave her such simplicity that she appeared to become a different person. She spoke of the grace of her vocation always with a joy and thankfulness that was quite extraordinary. The night she died, she said repeatedly: "My God, summon Thy handmaid to Thyself!"‡

There is a strange serenity in that brief reminiscence—a sense of the "peace of God" which should reign in the cloister, and

* Besoigne, "Hist. de Port-Royal," liv. 4.

† "Lettres," vol. ii. No. 512. ‡ Ibid., No. 514.

did in fact reign at Port-Royal, despite the struggle and agony endured by individuals, whose very sufferings have drawn them to distinction from among the rest. It is far harder to picture the daily life of the many than the experience of the single soul whose lot has isolated her; yet the true life of the community is that of the many—silent, monotonous, unnoticed—yet strong with the unobtrusive strength of union.

Such knowledge of it as we have, indeed, would not be ours if Port-Royal had not been attacked by calumny. It is to its defenders, and therefore indirectly to its enemies, that we owe the records that bring us closest to its inner life. We owe a debt to Antoine Arnauld specially, and he gains by the task he set himself, for in the contemplation of that self-surrendering routine the controversialist was softened into a mood of regretful sympathy, so that he can tell us of the customs of Port-Royal under his sisters' rule with a quiet power untainted by his usual bitterness. He presents to us once again the contrast betwixt the idea of the religious life as a refuge for the unhappy or incompetent and the idea of it conceived by Angélique. "Every one agrees," he says, "that there is nothing which contributes to the ruin of monasteries so much as excessive ease in admission without such assurance of vocation as can humanly be obtained. The majority of the women who embrace the religious life do not understand what it really means, for there is nothing in all that they see around them, even among people who make profession of piety to give them any real idea of it. As a rule, they are so young when they enter a monastery, and are given so much occupation with external things, that they have no chance of seeing what they undertake when they consecrate themselves by solemn vows to God, nor in what spirit so important an act should be approached. And in addition they are often zealously withheld from knowledge of all that could offend them in the religious life.

"And thus they find themselves involved in things that have not been explained to them, which puts them in danger of regretting their pledge as soon as they understand its meaning.

It is true that there is a year of novitiate; but when a maiden has once assumed the Habit in ceremony before all her relatives, it is in a degree a point of honour to go through with it, and to complete with a courage that is altogether mundane that which has been very lightly undertaken. Now, it is a very great misfortune to enter on so holy a condition in such unholy fashion, and to be made into a nun by men and not by the Spirit of God." * Thus far the learned Doctor tells an ofttold tale of a degenerate condition treated by many another writer far less temperately, and which it is his necessary task to recall to his readers' memory, that they may fully comprehend the sequel. And he is careful to abstain from invidious reference to any house in particular, suggesting by his general comments that where reform has been neglected, such neglect is due rather to lack of capacity than to lack of good intention. It is, he would have us believe, for the assistance and edification of the well-meaning that he records the system of Port-Royal—not to extol its excellence. And foremost among the characteristics of the system he places that of testing aspirants to the religious life most narrowly, of showing them all its difficulty from the first, of confronting them with the immeasurable scope of its ideals: "Et enfin on avait pour but de ne faire novices que celles que l'on croyat estre déjà professes devant Dieu." The best aim assuredly for all who desire to defend the religious life from profanation.

In this connection Arnauld does well to quote the Constitutions of Port-Royal drawn up † by la Mère Agnès, for it would be hard to find a record that bore stronger testimony to the unerring wisdom and good sense of his sisters. "The novices shall not be nourished on milk and honey," thus runs the ninth chapter of the Constitutions, "in the sense of dealing gently with them and humouring their wishes, but they shall be given strong meat in understanding the difficulties and hindrances that are part of the Way of God, attempting also at the same time to give

* "Image Abregée des Rel. de Port-Royal."

† In 1647.

them knowledge of the power of grace which overcomes these difficulties and lightens them by the blessed Unction dispersed in hearts that are moved to a real desire for the service of God." But it is the following direction to novice-mistresses * that sheds the strongest light on the life within the convent walls: "She shall do her best to withstrain them from too ardent a desire to be professed and too violent a fear of rejection, teaching them that the religious life consists chiefly in the interior surrender made by the soul to God with an abandonment of will, and with entire correspondence to the grace of their vocation. When this abandonment is to be found in a postulant, in the sight of God she is already professed, and in like manner the professed whose sacrifice is defective is inferior to a novice before God. Excessive anxiety to pass from one condition to another is a sign that there is too much thought of public opinion, and that, instead of resting in confidence in God Who can penetrate our hearts, there is a desire to appear to outward view that which possibly one is not in His sight. The soul that is really dead to self (wherein lies the essential of the religious life) will not care about her rank, being most content with the lowest."

Here, indeed, we seem to find a refrain of all the deepest teaching of the Port-Royalists. We have already noted how la Mère Agnès (even before they came in contact) echoed the thoughts of Saint-Cyran, and that great maxim of his, "Act as though the world contained only yourself and God," † is the dominant note of the directions to the novitiate. The completeness of his accordance with the spirit of those directions (whereby the whole life within the cloister of Port-Royal was governed, so long as Port-Royal lasted) will be seen by a glance at a letter that he wrote to the Abbess of another convent with reference to a novice under her care. "Before God our true desires have more weight than our most urgent petitions! Tell her from me that she must lean on God, not on His creatures! Let her say to him often: 'Lord, I yield myself to Thee; my life is in Thy

* "Image Abregée," and ch. 29 of "Constitutions de Port-Royal."
† "Lancelot, "Mem. de Saint-Cyran," vol. ii. p. 34.

hands.' After that let her rest in hope without anxiety or disturbance." *

"The religious life consists chiefly in the interior surrender made by the soul to God." That is in effect the same searching and mysterious claim as that in the sixth of the beatitudes. The interior surrender cannot be attained save by "ceux dont le cœur est purifié." If that condition can be reached, the question of outward status signifies nothing; they who would see God must seek God only. And the further we go in the quest for reality, the more clearly do we see that all realities merge at last into one great whole, wherein these differences (that to our limited vision have loomed so large and seemed to justify contests and divisions) sink into utter insignificance. And with them goes that great disputed question (of necessity often referred to here, because it bears so deeply on the vocation to the religious life), the question of the scope of human influence. For assuredly the influence that would prompt the repetition of that act of self-surrender, "Je m'abandonne à vous, Seigneur," has little suggestion of priest-craft, but is the summing-up of the great desire of the soul who seeks God only, and knows itself to be truly led by Him. In that lies the essence of Saint-Cyran's direction. His methods were searching, intimate, unsparing, but their effect was a reliance upon God that left no possibility for dependence upon man. It was his goal to make such independence possible, and in the highest outcome of the discipline he imposed upon his penitents, as it is shown to us repeatedly in the records of Port-Royal, his goal was attained.

But where he led the way others might follow who did not walk with equal circumspection, and in those days of dangerous innovation it is not wonderful that the watchful guardians of the Church's authority attacked him as a traitor and a heretic; while the tremendous standard of personal conduct he upheld, outraged the thousands who had spent their lives beneath a lighter ordinance. There was ample scope for misrepresentation, and Saint-Cyran was heedless how he might incur it; therefore, in the eyes of

* "Lettres Spirituelles de Saint-Cyran," vol. i. No. 15.

very many persons, he is a grim and forbidding figure, the embodiment of spiritual self-conceit; while to others—whose abhorrence of him is prompted by theological rather than personal misgivings regarding the outcome of his theories—he is the incarnation of chicane and hypocrisy. Yet if we regard him dispassionately we cannot fail to admit a possibility that that in him which seemed exaggerated and sensational was prompted by an effort after absolute consistency. The man who sincerely regards himself as the channel whereby the Will of God is communicated to another of God's creatures, and yet knows himself to retain a power of discretion in the method of communication, is necessarily conscious of a responsibility so solemn as to preclude exaggeration. He said he "would rather undertake the civil and political direction of a kingdom than the spiritual direction of one soul," * and on his lips the phrase was not an empty one, but the expression of his ruling thought. To his eyes the so-called supernatural—*i.e.* the direct intervention of God—was perpetually visible. A soul was converted by the direct touch of the Hand of God, and the response to the summons must be patent to the eyes of the world. But to give the right form and efficacy to that response, for the avoidance of exaggeration and furtherance of stability, it was prudent to have recourse to a director. Herein we find the clue to Saint-Cyran's failure to win the suffrages either of his colleagues in the Church, or of their critics. On the one hand, he claimed a possibility of independence for the individual soul that weakened the absolute power of the priests; on the other, he denied the capacity of the individual to find the way of righteousness unaided. Thus while he is accused of "undermining that very Church from which he derived his authority," † he is open to attack from the antagonists of the Church for his fidelity to her system, and his teaching of humility to others is held up to scorn because of the tremendous claim he made on behalf of his order. His own words, however, if calmly

* "Lettres Spirituelles de Saint-Cyran," vol. ii. No. 32, ch. 2.

† Father Dalgairns, "Spirit of Port-Royal" (Introduction to "The Heart of Jesus").

considered, reconcile precept and practice, and show to what degree he was imbued with the virtue to which he exhorted those followers of his who held the Divine commission.

"The deepest humility," he said, "is comprised under two heads: first—that we seek with diligence the purposes of God, whether in our use of the powers He has given or in our hopes of the promises that He has made; second—that we realize that we can do no good deed, nor say a telling word, nor in particular understood any truth, without the help of His light and His grace, to obtain which, according to the Will of God, we must pray continually and purify ourselves. He who has these two laws graven on his heart . . . is truly humble, and living in the absolute submission God requires." *

If that theory had been really accepted and put in practice by the ministers of the Catholic religion, the outcry against priest-craft would not be raised with such persistent vehemence in each succeeding generation. "Who indeed can be more humble than he who realizes his own nothingness and remembers perpetually that he has nothing that has not come from God?" † Yet that was the conclusion of the Jansenist doctrine of grace as Saint-Cyran expounded it to the nuns of Port-Royal, and the humility he thus suggested was as firmly rooted in the hearts of their directors as in their own. M. Singlin, M. de Saçi, M. de Ste. Marthe, these—one and all of the first generation of Port-Royalists—seem to have concentrated themselves upon the task to which their vocation summoned them with a complete detachment from all ulterior motives, which Saint-Cyran himself (who was always admittedly the advocate of the cause that he had most at heart) could not have rivalled.

The marvellous skill of these followers of his makes them the strongest of all witnesses of the wisdom of the Church's ordinances, while the actual teaching of the prisoner of Vincennes was an unflinching plea for the practice of direction, if—and the If should be writ large—he who assumes that dangerous office

* "Lettres Spirituelles de Saint-Cyran," vol. ii. Appendix 16.

† Ibid., appendix 17.

has paid due heed to the scope of his responsibility, and endeavoured reflectively and solemnly to fit himself for the revelation of God.

"Car ce n'est pas nous qui prions, qui parlons, qui souhaitons, qui travaillons, qui tolerons and qui souffrons, mais c'est l'esprit de Dieu, lorsque dans nos exercises nous avons le soin de nous unir à lui and de l'invoquer à tous momens." * That is the great ideal, the vision of a great reality, possible alike to priest and nun and those whose lot has held them in the world.

As regards human direction, it is a special characteristic of la Mère Angélique that she held its administration in openly expressed suspicion. Because she welcomed it so eagerly when she could prove and rely upon it, she cannot be accused of the self-assertive independence which will tolerate no guidance, but she is the more competent to criticize weakness because she could value strength. The separation from the direction of the religious of her own order which she brought about † was a very important step; the woman who could make it on her own initiative gave signal proof of courage. The Abbess of Port-Royal acted deliberately, not in revolt against conditions whose drawbacks suddenly revealed themselves, and she left on record a summary of the reasons that urged her into action which may at least be held to justify her. "That I may show what direction a nun may look for from a monk," she says, "I only desire to set down what they lack in helping us in the right way, concealing the miserable devices which they make evil use of. When an Abbess is haughty the Confessor is her henchman. This is so absolutely true that I have seen one occupied in planting the Abbess's flower-beds where he placed her arms and her cipher. Another I have seen carrying the train of an Abbess as lackeys do to Court ladies. If an Abbess is humble and holds the priesthood in reverence, as is her duty, they become masters and tyrants; so that no one may dare to act without their order—which often means disorder." ‡

* "Lettres Spirituelles de Saint-Cyran," vol. i. No. 9.

† See above, p. 93.

‡ "Nécrologe de Port-Royal," vol. ii. p. 175.

It is easy to see how destructive were both extremes to the hope of any gain from direction; but these evils, though easy to visualize in retrospect, were far more difficult to confront in actual experience. Angélique, when she struggled for freedom from traditional bondage, knew that its attainment would mean a further step in the dark, and, should she stumble, the finger of scorn would point at her presumptuous foolhardiness. We know that her first experience of a guide selected by herself in the person of Sebastien Zamet was not encouraging, and when the tide of disappointment and humiliation surged highest round her she had no premonition that the future held for her the strengthening presence of Saint-Cyran. "But for his help I should have perished," * she said once, looking back; and it may be believed that many a soul did come to shipwreck by misuse of the means ordained for its salvation.

But much of this power of Saint-Cyran was due to his intuition of the dangers attendant on its exercise, and he owed his special influence with Angélique Arnauld to his straightforward acknowledgment of the stupendous evils resulting from the arrogation of spiritual responsibilities by those who had not prepared themselves. "M. de Saint-Cyran en éprouvant les autres voulait aussi s'éprouver soi-même pour ne rien faire que dans une très grande pureté de cœur," says Lancelot; † and he had made the methods of his master a particular study, realizing and revealing his deep power of intuition with a clearness that brings the great Abbé within the apprehension of the ordinary understanding. He tells us that Saint-Cyran "said often that a director was under greater obligation to follow the spirit of God in those under him than were they to obey him. For those in authority should seek to bear the living image of God in its exercise, and those submitting to them should regard them as representing God, until such time as God removed them, that their charges might then be directly led by God Himself by the sure leading of His grace." Thus—says Lancelot, truly enough—we may see how far Saint-

* Lettres," vol. ii. No. 398.

† "Mem. de Saint-Cyran," vol. ii. p. 233.

Cyran was from desiring to subjugate souls; he wished only to prepare them to follow God's leading. S. John likewise did not seek to keep his disciples; his object was only to form them that they might be able to go to Jesus Christ. Saint-Cyran was wont to say that it was necessary to be greatly on one's guard against the concealed ambition which desires the domination of souls, that it was much greater and more dangerous than that of the princes of this world, who rule only over wealth and human lives; that the pride of the latter was merely the pride of the children of Adam, while that of the former, being far more subtle, was more like the pride of Satan. *

In brief, Saint-Cyran's ideal was tuition rather than coercion, and the fact that he dealt so much with religious, who of necessity submitted themselves without reserve to his guidance, emphasizes the judicial clearness of his regard for his office. The direction that means human dependence is destructive to true growth, and most enervating to just those characters who most readily embrace it. The strength displayed by the Port-Royalists, individually and collectively, when the moment of trial came to them, is sufficient proof that in them the quality of self-reliance had not been eliminated by any process of gradual subjugation. The gardener may foster the growth of a plant, but he does not pretend that he produces it, and the directors of Port-Royal sought rather to watch and follow the purposes of God than to pursue a plan adopted on their own initiative. All that is most remarkable in Port-Royal was the result of a long slow development of forces and circumstances, moulded, we may believe, by the grace of God, till they formed a monument of human possibilities of sacrifice. And though the threefold vow was kept in its entirety by every one of these chosen daughters of S. Benedict, yet it was their part to prove that the yoke of Christ may mean freedom of the spirit, and the obedience that is given in love is no check on the growth of individual character. It is his realization of this which makes the records of Antoine Arnauld specially convincing, and the unexpected power of discrimination displayed by the turbulent

* Lancelot, "Mem. de Saint-Cyran," vol. ii. p. 258.

controversialist where the Community of Port-Royal was concerned, reminds us that he was a disciple of Saint-Cyran, for he had no personal experience of the life of the cloister, nor did he possess the qualities that one would picture as being most apt for sympathy with it.

Yet not Angélique, nor Agnès, nor Jacqueline, with all their equipment of personal knowledge, could have let in clearer light upon their secret of spiritual attainment. "The chief cause of this unity and peace (in itself the greatest wealth of a religious house)," says Arnauld, "is without doubt the absolute reliance that all the sisters have in the Mothers, without which no monastery can remain in real unity. The Abbesses may sometimes speak vehemently and sometimes gently, but always with patience and charity. The sisters can speak out all that is in their hearts, and reveal themselves with absolute confidence." * "The perfect correspondence of tenderness and confidence between the Mothers and the nuns is the basis of that admirable peace and unity in which they lived to the last." † The strength of that peace and unity became apparent when secular and ecclesiastical authority ranged its display of power against the community, and the combination of wit and simplicity with which the nuns of Port-Royal met all attack was singularly baffling to those who desired to entrap them into an avowal of false doctrine. But—as one of them, the celebrated Christine Briquet, declared ‡—they made no question where Divine truths were concerned, for they held the Catholic faith; but men had not grace to give, therefore, if they imparted truth, they must give reasons. The daring protest was made with all the spirit of la Mère Angélique, though she had been two years in her grave, for la Sœur Christine was among her most worthy daughters, and had imbibed her dauntless courage. Nothing is more striking than the communion of love and sympathy which that close pressure of questions revealed.

* "Image Abregée," etc.

† "Justification des Rel. de Port-Royal" (ed. 1697), Art. 12, par. A. Arnauld.

‡ See Sainte-Beuve, "Port-Royal," vol. iv. p. 199.

Each nun might be interrogated separately, and each impress the interview with the stamp of her individuality, but the net result was identical with all, for all were of one mind, and at least the superiors of Port-Royal were acquitted once and for all of the charge that their direction was one of fear and trembling, or that the obedience of Port-Royal in thought and will and act was a forced obedience.

In their hearts each one was seeking the will of God, and the search was not merely a phrase, nor did they think that the crowning of the quest was easy; the life of the Port-Royalists was a perpetual witness that the way where Christ leads does not lie through pleasant places, and that the language of prayer is very difficult to learn. But their unity is the best proof of their sincerity. They were schooled by human direction, and to some the discipline was hard, but it was only a preparation for the intimate touch of the Divine. The world, in its restless desire for independence, in the reaction that had found its great outburst in the century before Port-Royal—the century of Calvin and of Luther and of the English Reformation—had loosened its grasp of the essentials of truth. It repudiated much that was false, but it recked little for the loss of the true that lay beneath the false. The sins of the priests were many, the power of the Church had been turned to evil uses, its discipline had fallen into disrepute. And men cried that God was independent of the Church, that those who called themselves His ministers were His worst enemies, that all were equal in His sight, and each might find Him for themselves. But history seems to show us that God's blessing did not rest on the independent. So infinite was the strength of the Church that human wickedness sufficient to overthrow the greatest of human institutions only proved her immutable foundations. And independence was shown to be synonymous with self-confidence, and, in the revolt against misdirected discipline, the virtue of humility ceased to be regarded as a necessity for Christian practice. The most conscientious of the Reformers were obsessed by an ideal of freedom, and the standard of the Sermon on the Mount was forgotten while they

clamoured for the phantasm of liberty which has deluded and beguiled mankind since the world began.

The most tragic element in the miserable chaos of that age of reconstruction is the desire for truth that inspired mistaken revolts against ignorance and error and hypocrisy. Among the Reformers there were many honest and conscientious men, some learned, some unprovided with that knowledge that is found in books, who made a watchword of a belief that, fundamentally, is true, but, like many another gospel counsel, must be held in its fullest meaning if we would mould ourselves by it. They said that God hearkened to all who cried to Him, that priestly guidance and intervention was unnecessary, that the Beatific Vision was for every Christian equally. And while, truly enough, they thus reasserted the all-embracing nature of the Love of Christ, they forgot that when He made His promises He imposed certain conditions for fulfilment. Standing in the midst of the turmoil of the world, doing battle with each other, snatching at the least advantage, reviling where they could not overcome, a perpetual prey to the passions of pride and malice, if of nothing baser,—it was thus that men claimed the blessings pledged to the meek, the merciful, and the penitent. And it was thus, revolting from slavery and touching licence, that men lost sight of the figure of Christ, and missed their way in the labyrinth of difficulty and mystery, in which He alone can guide.

We know that many of the nuns of Port-Royal were thoughtful women whose mental capacity raised them high above the average. Of the hermits enough has been said already; the literary fame of some of them is a matter of history. It may be accepted, therefore, that it was not the prevailing instinct among them to shrink away from the terrific questions that must present themselves sometimes to every reflective man or woman. They knew the pain of the world at close quarters—most of the phases of its sins and miseries were to be seen in Paris. They realized that all their efforts could accomplish little to alleviate distress or lessen sin. And turning to the brighter side, to the shifting phantasmagoria of society, to the ambitions of wit, of beauty, of

courtier, or of citizen, they realized that these, in fulfilment or in failure, were tainted with bitterness.

Mme. de Rambouillet, most brilliant, most successful, and most innocent of social queens, wrote her own epitaph in the middle of her triumphs, and wrote it thus—

> "Ici gît Arthenice exemte des douleurs
> Dont la rigueur du Sort l'a toujours poursuivie
> Et si tu veux, Passant, conter tous ses malheurs
> Tu n'auras qu'à comter les momens de sa vie."

The note of disappointment was, indeed, never lacking, even when gaiety was innocent and wit was more approved than scandal. And ever and again as with a thunderclap, the great issues of life and death would force themselves upon remembrance. Disease or violence would leave a vacant place in a gay circle, and one or another of those remaining, instead of closing up to hide the vacancy, would make it the more evident by shrinking back themselves, the one renouncing because the other had been deprived. For the French are an imaginative nation, and the grimness of death does not lessen the vividness of his appeal to the imagination when he comes suddenly. It would be an interesting study if we could know how many among the French Carmelites traced her vocation to a sudden death ; but at Port-Royal death was a constant, all-pervading thought, at once the only remedy for all the world's mysterious ills, and itself the greatest mystery of all, and thus the imaginative aspect of it grows less evident. The natural result of the practices of the nuns and hermits was the eradication of the fear of death. To some beings of strong vitality that fear is physical, but even so there are moments when mind can triumph over matter. He who can say, even though it be only in a moment of exaltation, "Mihi autem vivere Christus est mori autem lucrum," implies that he has touched eternal life ere human life is ended, and that the vision of God is an absorbing need, not a vague dream. The minds that are occupied with doing battle with their fellows, even though their cause be just, or are fixed on the fulfilment of ambition, though the ambition be a lawful one, are not thirsting

solely for righteousness, nor incapable of satisfaction apart from the thought of God. It was the idea of concentration that was specially the possession of the first of the generation of Port-Royalists, the steady upward aspiration that was nourished by monotony and silence, and only hindered by emotionalism and excitement.

The dealing of Saint-Cyran and of Angélique with those under their guidance seems often to be cruel in its relentless insistence on absolute renunciation. It is only when we realize the resulting gain that it assumes another aspect. He who would preach half-measures to those who seek the way of God is more truly merciless than the most unsparing of ascetics. "My sister," wrote Angélique, "we have no knowledge of the greatness of God, of His holiness and His wisdom, nor of our exceeding unworthiness and weakness. If we had the least inkling of these truths we should be continually filled with awe and fear, and remain in such profound humiliation that we should desire nothing more than to be humbled, rebuked, corrected, and controlled, that by such means we may purify our souls." *

If we had the least inkling of these truths, indeed, and with it the conviction that the practice of the Port-Royalists would bring us nearer to understanding of them, a lifetime of self-discipline and silence would seem but a little price to pay. But a mist hides from us their true value, nor is there a broad road that shall lead a man to righteousness; the ways of God remain mysterious, the path to which the steps of one are turned, almost against his will, eludes another who may seek it patiently. The nuns and hermits of Port-Royal were happy in that they found it possible to bring experience down to simple measure, and choose between God and Mammon with deliberate weighing of facts and ultimate issues. The grace to desire God to the exclusion of the claims of pride and self-indulgence was given them in such full measure that it did not wane beneath the long tax of hourly endurance and repression. It was the secret of their strength, that they kept the end ever before their eyes, and were never distracted by the

* "Lettres," vol. ii. No. 654.

means that again and again have engrossed the visions of others with aspirations originally as high as theirs. The methods, the ceremonies, all the adjuncts of the religious life, were at Port-Royal most truly subsidiary to the real object of earthly existence, the training of the soul for eternity, the purifying of the heart for the vision of God. The hearts of the humblest of them were turned towards their Master's promise, claiming it in fear and trembling lest the condition in them was not fulfilled, yet in hope, whose joy overwhelmed them, because they knew their whole lives were poured out in the great aspiration after the blessing that awaits the pure in heart.

CHAPTER XV

"THE PRAYER OF THE POOR"

In the long life of Angélique Arnauld she was again and again confronted with a question which—however constantly it may present itself—must always be most difficult to determine, that of the exact value of a human influence in the development of character. To many of the men and women who had witnessed its growth Port-Royal seems to have represented the chosen field for the exercise of personal influence of the domineering and aggressive species; but to those of penetrating and reflective mind it represented also, and at the same time, the nursery of a pronounced type of spiritual independence. Moreover, the two alien suggestions were so welded together that the idea of submission as a condition anterior to independence in the upward progress of a soul, is part of a clear impression of the Port-Royal system.

It was only possible to the critics who looked no further than the surface to make direction as practised at Port-Royal synonymous with arbitrary dictation. Near knowledge was, indeed, required to reveal the true root of the austerity, outward and inward, distinguishing the religious life as practised there. It has been said that the Port-Royalists had no desires that did not conform to their duty.* Inasmuch as desire only ceases to be involuntary after long discipline, this is a pregnant saying; it signifies the self-surrender that has swept the domain of thought and devastated every erection of the will that is not founded in the Will of God. When that condition is attained human direction loses force, but such attainment is rare. In aspiration

* Joubert, "Pensées."

towards it the nuns of Port-Royal were sustained by guides of such wisdom and experience that there could be no possibility of questioning the gain accruing from their presence. The Mother-Abbess, who had known a need as great as theirs without the means of satisfying it, realized the full extent of their good fortune, and rejoiced at the mark of Divine favour to her beloved community. But her experience revealed to her that the misuse of spiritual guidance was not to be attributed completely to the shortcomings to the many who had arrogated an office for which only a few could have capacity ; and she did not shrink from acknowledging the weaknesses to which she knew her sex to be the prey. She desired, indeed, at whatever cost of humiliation, that others should profit by the fruit of her experience, and when the Queen of Poland attempted to institute a religious community within her realm, Angélique warned M. de Fleury, their Superior, of the vast difficulties and complications of his task. "Monsieur," she wrote, "permit me to tell you, because of the veneration and affection that I have for you, that the direction of nuns demands infinite precaution, for they are not always as sincere as they ought to be, or as they appear to be. It does not do to seem to suspect them, but only to take every opportunity of showing them how impossible it is to serve them if they are not honest and simple. You will need great patience for the endurance of their folly and their weakness, and, moreover, they must be neither too much encouraged nor rebuked, for the majority can bear neither the one nor the other, becoming immediately either self-complacent or despairing." *

Truly no glamour blinded the eyes of the Abbess Angélique to the realities of human nature. She had been a nun from childhood and always in the company of nuns, and she did not regard a community as a Society of Saints. "If we would discover if a woman has a vocation," said she, "it does not do merely to see whether she *is* virtuous, but if she has an earnest desire to become so, and therefore, moved by the Spirit of God, desires to be stablished by obedience in the religious life, which

* "Lettres," vol. ii. No. 685.

the blessed Bishop of Geneva said was the hospital for spiritual ills, where recovery was certain if we accept the treatment. All our hope lies in following the Will of God."* There must have been infinite comfort to the timid and the wavering in the asserted and settled faith that prompted every word of the Abbess Angélique; and though her discipline was stern there was never in it even a hint of arrogance. To those whom she commanded as much as to those whom she advised, her utterance was always informed by that humility which she had acquired by daily training of self-discipline. She conveys most clearly by her own words what was her standard for a Mother-Abbess, an office requiring qualities as rare as those of the ideal director. "Above all," she wrote to a religious in authority, "have endless patience in tolerating the faults of others; you will correct them better by humbling yourself before God on behalf of those who commit them than by severe rebuke, which as a rule is the fruit of purely human impulse and not inspired by charity, and therefore has only ill effects." And then, as so often chanced when Angélique Arnauld, desiring to help others, set down her own conception of fitting conduct, she became covered with confusion at her own shortcomings in contrast with the standard she proclaimed. "I am ashamed to say this to you," she wrote, "for you know it far better than I can, and I do not put it the least in practice, being continually carried away by impulse and not guided by the light of grace." †

If it was impulse which prompted those self-revelations of humility we may be glad that Angélique was sometimes carried away by it. Her own misdoing seemed to be ever in the fore-front of her memory to be displayed to others lest they should fall as she had. "I ask God that you may spend your youth better than I spent mine. It slipped away and was wasted before I knew it, and I find myself old in years but a child in virtue." ‡ "Let us agree together to give battle to hastiness and impatience, which ought at my age, even by the course of nature, to be

* "Lettres," vol. i. No. 83.

† Ibid., vol. i. No. 45.

‡ Ibid., vol. ii. No. 596.

deadened, or at least much reduced. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that this temper is still so alive in me that it betrays me daily into sin. Instead of regarding God in all that happens and in all that offends me, and submitting humbly to His Will in all things, I allow myself to be overtaken by impatience or depression." *

The sequel of self-reproach in the Mother-Abbess's exhortations and rebukes is so invariable as to savour of egotism; her skill in direction suggests the problem of the relative value in spiritual dealing of the nature profoundly susceptible to temptation and that which seems preserved from infancy by a special vocation to holiness. The consciousness of sin was an ever-present pain to Angélique; it haunted her when she would fain have rested from it, because her vigorous reason insisted on accentuating the contrast between her vision of the effects of grace and the reality of her own condition. "It seems to me that all I do, I do from an interested motive and by calculation, because I know the calamity that must overtake those who scorn the law of God. I never feel in the depths of my heart that pure love of God which should be the source and the aim of all we do, and so I see as much evil in acts that seem to be virtuous as when I fall into sin." † Not often, surely, does the mind of man or woman combine the gift of logic with such refinement of the introspective faculty. Strength, mental and physical, is taxed by the collusion, for it involves merciless self-dissection. The gifts bestowed on Angélique Arnauld were greater than often fall to the lot of woman; the more we study her the more we realize her capacity and her proportionate achievement, but her gifts were not those that make for happiness. Hers was a nature designed for suffering, incapable of full development in paths of pleasantness, and if she ever seemed to others to be enviable, the illusion was speedily dispelled by the first touch of intimacy. From her conversion to her death the authority of office was a burden and a cross, though, in fact if not in name, she supported it with hardly any intermission all her life.

* "Lettres," vol. ii. No. 638 (to the Queen of Poland).

† Ibid., No. 422.

Nothing, indeed, roused her more surely to plain-speaking than any misconception of the condition of which she had such deep experience. To her, at any rate, to take the foremost place was an occasion of humiliation, and she felt that it was a safeguard of its right acceptance so to take it. There is almost a scoffing note in her reply to a newly elected Abbess who had written to her in doubt lest she should be risking temptation greater than she was able to support. "What is it you are afraid of?" she wrote. "Is it that you will be too much uplifted? My very dear Mother, I can assure you that your charge will bring you more chances of humiliation than you could have if you remained a simple nun, and if you desire, as I doubt not you do, to lead a life of great penitence, you will find more opportunity in one day as an Abbess than you have hitherto during months. An Abbess who fears God and has been called by Him, regards herself as the servant of all the nuns, as in fact she is, and bound truly to serve them by every means with love and care and consideration. And, in truth, dear Mother, being as you are, already well assured of these things, and desirous of fulfilling them, I would suggest that your excessive misgivings come from a sort of indolence, and I think—if I dare let my frankness carry me so far—that your distress proceeds rather from pride than from humility. One thinks that one has done enough sometimes to be regarded as a good religious, but may fear that, as an Abbess, one may be more closely criticized and by higher standards; and being found wanting, our uplifting becomes a source of real humiliation. We do not acknowledge such ideas as these—they are too unvarnished; but a certain confused discomfort grows within us, resulting from self-love, and though its evil root is not apparent, it has it none the less." *

Humility—that, in fact, is the one sure root of strength, the sole antidote to the self-love, from which "a certain confused discomfort grows." Yet there is, perhaps, no virtue which betrays an earnest soul so readily into self-deception, and therefore Angélique's scrutiny was the sharper and the more incisive towards those who made a great profession of lowliness of spirit.

* "Lettres," vol. ii. No. 641.

We see repeated instances of the unsparing vigour with which she treated this description of weakness. Any exaggeration in external practices of penitence roused her suspicion, at times also her wrath. Her short and simple rule was to disregard the opinion of men, to endeavour to hold all things as before God. "The means of advance in mortification," said she, "is to repress the senses, to be assiduous in calling ceaselessly for aid from God, not to allow ourselves to be discouraged when we fail, but to begin again with complete humility and the realization of our inconstancy and powerlessness for good." *

It is the exact reproduction of Saint-Cyran's maxim, but it was as much the natural growth of Angélique's mind as it was of his. She, in her old age (when she was supremely the object of the love and admiration of others), could write to Le Maistre to implore that he and his brothers should pray that she might be kept from conceit and levity and the danger of a chattering tongue; † and in like manner Saint-Cyran could declare that the imprisonment which was an outrage in the eyes of all his friends, was only the just due of the self that he knew as no one else could know it.‡ For good or evil judgment, the eyes of the world are blind. The chosen of God must look to God only in the simplicity that is understood by the poor in spirit. M. de Sericourt, Lancelot tells us, once asked Saint-Cyran for a method of prayer, saying that as a soldier he needed such assistance more than others might. "M. de Saint-Cyran replied by gesture more than by speech. Joining his hands lightly, inclining his head a little, and raising his eyes towards God, he answered, 'We need only this, Monsieur. It is enough that we should remain humbly in the presence of God, being only too far favoured if He regards us.'" § It was this which he termed the Prayer of the Poor: "Dans cet état on ne fait qu'exposer ses plaies et ses nécessités á Dieu afin qu'il lui plaise seulement de les regarder." ‖

* "Lettres," vol. ii. No. 480. † Ibid., No. 43.
‡ "Vie Edifiantes: Mem. de Saint-Cyran de A. d'Andilly," vol. i. p. 33.
§ Lancelot, "Mem. de Saint-Cyran," vol. ii. p. 41.
‖ Ibid., p. 39.

It required the experience and intuition of Saint-Cyran to formulate that simple direction, and no one knew better than he, that when a score will welcome an elaborate injunction, only one will accept simplicity. But even he, perhaps, did not know the full difficulty of his prayer of poverty. Angélique Arnauld was capable of understanding it, of knowing that to realize it (for her especially, with her aptitude for the extremes of feeling) was a high and noble goal, and it may be that her force of realization fostered the discouragement that haunted her to the end. As her life draws near its conclusion, the impression of solitude at all times linked to the thought of her is greatly intensified. In proportion to the strength of a personality is the realization of solitude, and as old age grew upon her, it was inevitable that she should awake to the utter inadequacy of human sympathy and companionship. It was ordained that her heart should know that restlessness which God only can satisfy; a sequel of spiritual craving was the fit complement to the triumphant accomplishment that was the fruit of her early and middle life; and no human comfort had power to lighten the intense melancholy that marked her closing years.

But although that impression of solitude is necessary to our conception of her, it is equally evident that she found true spiritual affinity on two occasions in the course of her experience. In the Abbé de Saint-Cyran she discovered the qualities which responded to those which dominated her nature. Her own strength was matched by his, her deep realization of the vanity of human desires and ambitions found an echo in his teaching; her fierce intolerance of the weakness of the flesh, of the vacillations of the unsurrendered will, was met by that tremendous doctrine of penitence that stirred the wrath of the Jesuits and made the hermits of Port-Royal a spiritual power. In all that Port-Royal means of passionate protest against apathy in prayer and superficiality in faith, la Mère Angélique and the Abbé de Saint-Cyran were one in intention and desire; and la Mère Angélique, when Saint-Cyran died, never wavered from the precepts they had shared. But before Saint-Cyran came to her, she had known

sympathy of a kind more human yet not less spiritual. Among her many causes for gratitude to François de Sales, there was none greater than the friendship with Mme. de Chantal which she owed to him. The period of his personal influence over her was a beautiful episode, but it was only an episode; it is possible to trace the development of her character, independent of the years when she was permitted intercourse with him. The influence of Mme. de Chantal would be far harder to eliminate from a just summing up of the forces that made her what she was. By utterly divergent experiences the two arrived at almost the same point. Mme. de Chantal had known the world, she was a wife and a mother, she had tasted all the joys of human love, but, to her, self-renunciation had been as absolute a necessity as to Angélique Arnauld. When she had fulfilled the claims of duty, she spared no thought to those of personal desire, and her life was an effectual example both of piety and wisdom. In the records of her there is no indication that her nature had the tendency to violence that distinguished the reformer of Port-Royal. She was able to reflect the spirit of François de Sales as Angélique could not; nevertheless, there came to her, as afterwards to Angélique, a sort of spiritual despair that found vent in the same vehement self-accusation.

To them both was presented a problem not easy of solution; but undoubtedly the previous experience and confidential avowals of Mme. de Chantal were an assistance to Angélique amid her own misgivings. It is stated sufficiently in the words of the former: "I talk about God. I seize every opportunity of encouraging others, I write as if I was feeling and responding to all that I express, and all the time I do it with repugnance; I force myself to do it." *

There was in Angélique an essential quality of honesty; it was a characteristic of Saint-Cyran, if a man's friends may be trusted on such a point; and in every record of Mme. de Chantal it is self-evident; yet to each of the three there came continual demands for words of spiritual help, of exhortation, of advice that

* Mme. de Chantal to la Mère Angélique, November 30, 1637.

should stimulate high aspiration, and to each came periods of dryness and hopelessness which seemed to themselves to make their words a mockery. Saint-Cyran regarded these as mortifications imposed by God, "because it is very essential to our good that we should believe without seeing," * and accepting his suffering as a penance, he continued to teach as though the light were not temporarily hidden. But to a woman this course is far more difficult. Once having yielded to the habit of perpetual introspection, it demands a vigorous exercise of resolution to practise spiritual resignation, and the clash of reiterated precept and actual experience made the duties of their office a source of agony to the foundress of the Order of the Visitation, and to the reformer of Port-Royal.

The remedy, found and acknowledged by Mme. de Chantal, was not easy to adopt; it was represented by Saint-Cyran's Prayer of the Poor, in which the distracted soul renounced all effort, and having the desire of the presence of God, even without capacity or realization of it, rested in silence, in patience, in absolute acquiescence with the deprivation it might be required to support. To Mme. de Chantal this practice presented peculiar difficulty. As she wrote to Angélique, her brain "was naturally active and never calm, therefore she was continually distracted." † Without doubt she suffered extremely from this difficulty of prayer, coming as it did after a life of continuous piety, in which the desire for spiritual advance was unflagging. But, to her friend and confidante, to whom self-depreciation and disgust were an actual temptation, that record of the close of a saintly life was a support. No dissentient voices were ever raised to challenge the sanctity of Mme. de Chantal, and its reality was specially impressive to Angélique by reason of their intimacy. Therefore, when she too was dismayed by spiritual incapacity as her life drew to its close, her agony was softened by the recollection, that what she suffered had been suffered in like manner by one who had seemed to be peculiarly elected as the handmaid of the Lord; and the despairing

* "Lettres Spirituelles de Saint-Cyran," vol. i. No. 1.

† Mme. de Chantal to la Mère Angélique, February 15, 1639.

thought that her own iniquities had brought just retribution was put to flight.

Thus it is plain that the influence of others had an essential place in the moulding of her character, and to her the great strength of spiritual guidance was its power to give her confidence, and to calm the fierceness of her self-accusation. Yet even while she took such comfort, she shows sometimes an underlying sense that her need of it was a weakness, that the proofs of God's goodness to her (that she could see for herself in the long years of experience that lay behind her) should have been sufficient to assure her of the continuance of His grace. God gave to the Abbé de Saint-Cyran such knowledge of the spirit of the religious life, that to understand and practise what he taught in its full meaning would have meant that the Kingdom had indeed been found on earth. The Prayer of the Poor was in truth the key-note of the whole; and it was only the poor in spirit who could grasp its meaning, and look for grace as the sole defence against the powers of evil in every passing moment. Moreover, if that realization of Divine grace as a thing freely given be ignored, the doctrine of original sin on which Saint-Cyran constantly insisted was justly considered to be terrible, and repugnant to every instinct of faith and reason. But to ignore it is to misjudge him. The one part of his teaching cannot be taken without the other, and it is in consequence of such one-sided acceptance of the general theory of the Port-Royalists that many erroneous views have sprung up regarding them. For though the Church in those days was a very evident fact of which men in all ranks were continually reminded, it is clear that religion was only cherished by a very few. It was the part of Port-Royal to exchange the appeal to the senses, with which the Church's representatives seemed to be content, for an appeal to the heart, to make material give place to spiritual. That which took form in the life of the cloister applied equally to life in the world, for it was only the folly and blindness of men that had made the second form of consecration necessary.

Saint-Cyran and la Mère Angélique fought despairingly,

assured of failure, yet unable to withold their message, because the ears that listened were not trained to understanding. That message was the Prayer of the Poor, and as such it stands as their joint lesson to their generation within and without the cloister; for the words of the one are but an echo of the thought of the other. "I beseech you to direct all your endeavours to serving God in spirit. Whatever strength of body you may have, you have not enough to fulfil the claims of the religious life, unless you take your strength from God, who takes no delight in any bodily act or endurance, if it is not a fruit of His grace. And to receive it from Him we must take pleasure in constant intercourse with Him, by love that is free from constraint and from self-consciousness. The mental efforts that we make in prayer, and the sensation and delight we seek, are proofs rather of love of self than of love to God." * "It does not do to trouble our minds with questions, whether we make any advance in prayer day by day. Such inquiries are unworthy of the poor in spirit, who deem themselves too happy to be numbered among the children of Jesus Christ. In human conditions the sole desire of a dutiful child is to ask simply and humbly without any calculation, and to wait for the time of response." †

"I beseech you to direct your endeavours to serving God in spirit." It is a phrase which in intent was continually on the lips of the Abbess Angélique. She began, no doubt, with something far less simple, with a scheme whereby the gradual ascent of spiritual life might be marked by stages, and her daughters of Port-Royal be led onwards and upward, step by step, giving ever fresh proof of the certainty of their call, and of the faith that lay behind it, so that each year should give them more consciousness of strength for the battle against sin. But whatever may have been in detail the ideal with which she faced the world and dedicated her life to the reform that made her so prominent in history, we may be sure that it shared the fate of other ideals of youth, and never reached its fulfilment. Her accomplishment

* "Lettres Spirituelles de Saint-Cyran," vol. i. No. 52

† Ibid., No. 43.

was, nevertheless, higher than her conception. Exterior regulations occupied her greatly at the beginning; from that stage she passed to a period when the desire for emotional delight in prayer dominated her deeper instinct of devotion. That was the sharpest test of all to which her nature was submitted; she emerged from it with the vein of sadness innate in her, intensified, and with the cloud of failure dimming usefulness. But she had found for herself the meaning of the Prayer of the Poor, and thenceforward she asked no more than to spread out her weaknesses and sins and disappointments before Him who knew her need, and could heal when it should please Him. "She used to say very often," wrote one of the nuns of Port-Royal, "that she had material enough for a book on the Providence of God, so great had been her experience of it, and that which it would best please her to leave us after her death was absolute confidence in this glorious Providence, whose guidance of us seemed to be by miracle." *

The memoir of her life, which is of such inestimable value to all who desire knowledge of her, is the result of dexterous working on this idea of hers. The egotism that is often expressed in autobiography had no place in her character, and her record is bare of the personal picturesqueness that adorns the chronicles of her contemporaries. She shrank from writing it so much that the nuns despaired of persuading her (though they were convinced of the excellence of their arguments), and finally their purpose was effected only under obedience. M. Singlin, who was then director at Port-Royal, made use of his authority, and the Mother-Abbess might resist no longer. She yielded against her will, for it was her great dread that she should be written about after her death. "But being obliged to give in, she went into retreat in a lonely little cell that was called 'la Guette,' and so, praying more than writing, she composed her 'Relation' with such infinite distaste that she made a pretext of other business and left it incomplete, as it stands to this day." †

The account written at the time of the last days of la Mère

* Introduction, "Relation de Port-Royal." † Ibid.

Angélique * is strangely in keeping with her personal record, for it impresses on us how carefully she strove to say or do nothing that was remarkable. Old age had overtaken her, and the persecution from which the community was suffering robbed her of that vitality which in a happier season might have preserved her to her daughters beyond the natural limit of human existence. She recognized that recovery was hopeless when her last illness seized her, and she is never more strongly individual than in the picture drawn by those who tended her.

She was so widely known and loved that it was not wonderful that a few messages to the absent should be demanded of her. A few words was all that was desired, but she refused to speak them, maintaining a discouraging silence. So great was the awe that she inspired that only a vivid realization of the urgency of the need could have made importunity possible, but some one was found bold enough to venture, and the response is possibly more valuable than any conventional last words. "I am silent with intention," said la Mère Angélique; "I wish to prevent the possibility of such useless chatter as is customary on such occasions. They are made an excuse for talking. One will say: 'Our late Mother said that to me;' another, 'To me she said this.' All of which is but an opening for the Devil, who will seize every chance to distract us from application to God, from inward recollectedness, and from that silence which is the duty of the religious." †

Two years before, Marie des Anges, Abbess of Maubuisson, had died, and it was suggested that she had been more indulgent to those who loved her. "It is not the same thing," said Angélique; "it was right for her to do as she did, for she possessed true simplicity and great humility. I am not like her."

She had spent the winter 1660–61 at Port-Royal des Champs, much troubled by anxiety as to the future fate of the community, and very feeble in bodily health. In Lent there seemed to some

* "Relation de Port-Royal" (sequel containing the full record of the last days of la Mère Angélique).

† See also her words to Le Maistre, Entretien 40.

to be reason for hope that matters might adjust themselves, but Angélique did not accept it. The time had come for them to suffer, she said, and she had no other aim but to prepare herself. She judged rightly. The Easter festival was hardly over before the royal order came that the pensionnaires were to be withdrawn from the convent of Port-Royal. Thereupon, seeing that Paris was the centre for persecution, la Mère Angélique determined to remove thither, and on Saturday, April 23, she bade her last farewell to Port-Royal des Champs.

Her brother d'Andilly awaited her outside the gates. She greeted him with the same resolution as had supported her among her weeping sisters within. "Adieu, mon frère," said she; "whatever comes be of good courage."

"Do not fear for me, sister," was his response; "I have no lack of it." It was their last interview, and the love and misgiving that had been mingled in all Angélique's thoughts of her gifted brother were present with her as vividly as in her calmest moments. "Ah, brother, brother, let us be humble," she said; "we must remember that though humility, without firmness, may be cowardly, yet courage without humility is presumptuous."*

Fearful though she was of the undue weight attaching to "last words," Angélique was here betrayed into their utterance, and struck, in that impulsive saying, the keynote of her own chief temptation as much as of her brother's. Even in the ardour of her resolution not to pose upon her death-bed there is a self-consciousness that misses true humility. Nothing in her life is more pathetic than her realization of that besetting sin of hers, as present with her in her last hours as in the first days of her conversion. For her task in life she had needed all the strength and courage which God had endowed her, but—as it seemed—inseparable from them was the weakness that made her so intensely human, and her rebuke to d'Andilly was but a reiterated warning to herself.

She returned into the midst of woe and agitation in the Faubourg S. Jacques, and she controlled her bodily weakness that

* N. Fontaine, "Mem.," vol. iii. p. 285.

she might support the fainting hearts of her sisters. Novices and pensionnaires were all being exiled from Port-Royal, and the strong spirit of la Mère Angélique was sorely needed to control the despair that was taking possession of the community. Humanly not one among them was less hopeful than the Mother-Abbess, but to her it seemed that it was the Hand of God and not of man that afflicted them, and that with Eternity so near them the degree and diversity of their earthly experience of suffering mattered but little. Yet she loved Port-Royal with a deeper love than any of those who wept so passionately for the misfortunes that had overtaken the community, and the children and young girls who were torn from her keeping were, many of them, specially and individually dear to her, having been trained almost from babyhood under her eye. She was required, by the royal order which compelled him to withdraw, to say farewell to M. Singlin, who was the representative of the spirit of Saint-Cyran. She regarded him as a pillar of strength for the maintenance of the order that she had established among her sisters, but she saw him go with firmness, accepting this also as a part of the purpose of God.

The nuns, remembering the miracle that had so recently brought them a period of outward relief, desired to testify their simple faith by carrying the relics that they treasured in their chapel in procession, barefoot, in token of penitence. They implored la Mère Angélique to take part with them and carry a fragment of the True Cross. She yielded, but her bodily strength was less than her courage, and as she entered the choir, her limbs would no longer support her, and she fell prostrate. She was carried from the chapel to her bed, and entered on a period of physical and mental torment which tested the resignation and self-surrender which life had taught her to its furthest limits. Again and again the agony of death seemed to have overtaken her, and therewith the terror that had always haunted her became intensified. But she did not lose patience. In the interlude of her sufferings she accepted that they were the means of her purification, and found comfort. "Believe me, my children,"

she said, "believe what I am telling you. We do not realize what death means, we give little thought to it. I have been fearful of it all my life, I have always had it in my mind; but all that I have pictured is less than nothing compared with the reality, with what I am feeling, with the understanding that has come to me now. It should not need more than this to teach us detachment. Now the whole world is less than nothing to me. I feel myself in absolute solitude and separation from all things, so that it seems that all I see and hear can take no place in my mind, nor interrupt that which has complete possession of it. As death appears to me, I cannot understand how any Christian who holds the faith can think or trouble themselves, or be anxious about anything else in this life, save that they must die, and must prepare themselves for that terrible moment."

Here, indeed, we seem to be brought face to face with "the religion of fear and trembling," of which Saint-Cyran and Angélique stand accused, yet we must remember that death was very near when the words were spoken, and near in the terrible aspect which he can assume when his approach is made with slow yet certain footsteps. To Angélique he came as an implacable enemy whom she had dreaded all her life,* but her dread was not the result of her faith, it was a part of her nature, and may be said to have coloured her faith, clouding it with the gloom which, most unjustly, has been regarded as a necessary attribute of a creed that brought joy and peace to many a troubled soul. It is possible that in those last days when she lay in silence, facing the end of earthly life, the doctrine of penitence that had been Saint-Cyran's message to the world, did loom so large among bewildered thoughts as to disturb the balance of her reason. The consciousness of sin had been an ever-present instinct with her, the contrast, forcible enough in all religious meditations, "betwixt man's nothing-perfect and God's all-complete," overwhelmed in her mind all suggestion of comfort from the record of high aspiration

* See, for example, in 1649: "Je suis dans la même misere, desirant toujours la vie et apprehendant toujours la mort."—To M. Macquet, "Lettres," vol. i. No. 269.

and strong endeavour which her life displayed to others. To the many who, from far and near, implored that they might render her some little service, she had but one answer: "Let them ask God to have mercy upon me and pardon me my sins."

If we could picture Jaqueline Arnauld, with her deep force of will and brain, living in those troublous years of Richelieu's rule and the Great Monarch's youth, we should see her, assuredly, in the van of some great movement, marked as a leader, whether for good or evil; prominent in the sight of the world, even as she was in her convent of Port-Royal. And if we traced her from stage to stage of failure and success, buoyed up through all vicissitudes by the desire of accomplishment which was inherent in her, we might be able to record great moments of triumph, of the joy of fulfilled ambition, but assuredly with the approach of the inevitable end all thoughts of triumph would be routed by overwhelming terror. Angélique the nun shuddered and was dismayed at Death's approach; but Jaqueline Arnauld, swept away by the wild life of a stormy period, yet with the vivid realization of the Unseen which was an inseparable part of her nature, must have sunk into the madness of despair. Her mind, from the first, grasped terror as an attribute of Almighty power; it required the training of a lifetime to win the apprehension of love. In her last illness she seems to have lived her life again. She passed once more through the discipline of fear, and the courage that had borne her through the years of strain did not desert her when its agony became intensified, and, as in old age she had found a gleam of peace that in her early time of struggle was denied her, so in her closing hours the clouds parted, and light streamed upon her weary soul.

M. Singlin came to her secretly, and as they parted for the last time, she said: "I shall not see you again, my father, but I promise you that I shall no longer be afraid of God."

It was a fitting end to their long intercourse. M. Singlin, the faithful humble servant of his Master, was, humanly, the inferior of the woman he had directed for nearly twenty years, yet it was his to guide and hers to follow, and those parting words set the

seal upon their spiritual bond. She could reason and judge and understand when he would pause abashed, but he had grasped the secret for which she had been groping; to his simple mind the Love of God was a reality, to hers—more complex—it was the hardest article of faith. Seeing and holding it, Angélique's mind grew clear, and she knew that at last she had attained, and that man had no further power to add to her treasure or to snatch it from her. Even the gentle-hearted priest, who had comforted many a dying nun within those convent walls, could bring nothing to the Mother-Abbess.

"I feel the love of M. Singlin brings him as near to me as though I could see him," said la Mère Angélique; "I know what he would say to me, and I try to be in the condition of mind to which he would lead me. I have had great reverence for his direction, as I have still, but I have never put a man in the place of God; he can have only that with which God entrusts him, and he is given nothing for us unless it be God's will that we should gain something from him."

The daughters of la Mère Angélique were not able to be reflections of her, and to some, in whom, perhaps, the life of the cloister had fostered the spirit of dependence, this seemed a hard saying. One among them even ventured to remonstrate, and was met by an echo of the familiar vehemence of their Mother-Abbess.

"What troubles you, my daughter?" said she. "Have we no faith? Shall we not fear lest God may say of us as He said in the words of the Prophet: 'For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water'?* This is what we do if we cling to any human being, seeking the help we need from him to lead us to God, instead of going straight to the Fountain-Head, which is God, and to His infinite Goodness, which never fails those who put their trust in Him. And we need not distract ourselves with regrets for people who could only help us to just that degree for which God gave them grace—the grace is not given if it is not His will to let them help us."

* Jer. ii. 13.

To some of her listeners it may have seemed that she cast a slur on the theory of direction, yet she was, in fact, paying her tribute to the greatest director of Port-Royal. She had followed him in spirit, but, as he would have had her do, she had looked beyond him, and the words that had been on his lips so often were the inspiration of all her dying thoughts. "Dieu seule" was the great climax of all her struggling searchings after light, and nothing that she said or did in those weeks of suffering rang false with that pure note of supreme confidence. "Yield all and trust all," was her repeated counsel to the trembling nuns, on whom the threats and signs of persecution were already pressing. In July, M. de Contes (representing the titular Archbishop, de Retz) descended on the convent, searching for evidence of heresy. The latter visited the dying Abbess, expressed concern at her illness, and asked if she was not troubled by it.

She welcomed the opportunity of testifying. "I am far less troubled than by that which has overtaken the community," she said; "I came here to die, and was prepared for it, but I was not prepared for that which I am now beholding, and had no reason to expect the treatment we receive. Monsieur! Monsieur! this may be the hour of man, but the hour of God will come, who will reveal many things and avenge all." And then, growing calmer, she added: "There are few religious houses, Monsieur, wherein, having made the same research as has been made here, there would not be found more books, more novelties, and more knowledge of current questions than there is among us. For assuredly, Monsieur, you will find but a very simple faith among all our sisters."

When M. de Conte returned, a few weeks later, la Mère Angélique was dead, and probably his task presented less difficulty, for no man, however much his nature might be warped by the ways of Courts, could have listened to the remonstrance of that indomitable spirit and remained unmoved. Nevertheless, though she could defend their cause before the world, Angélique did not share the distress and apprehension of her sisters. It would seem as if in her heart she was not convinced that deliverance would

be their greatest benefit. The desire for humility had gone to the very root of her reflections. She said her chief anxiety was that the spirit of simplicity, of poverty and charity, should be preserved and increased in the community; that spirit was apt to lessen constantly, but while it was cherished, nothing else mattered. "All that they do or intend doing against us," she said, "troubles me no more than does this fly;" and therewith she flicked away one that had settled in front of her with an animation that infected her companions. If at that period a miracle had restored Port-Royal to its old ascendancy, the Mother-Abbess would have died less peacefully. She would not allow the inference in private discussion that man might be held responsible for all that threatened them. She said to some great lady who condoled with them: "God does all things with a wisdom and benevolence that we can see for ourselves. We needed all that has happened to make us humble. It would have been a danger to us to remain any longer in such riches. Not another community in France was so overwhelmed with spiritual blessings. We were talked about everywhere. Believe me, we needed to be humbled by God; if He had not brought us low, we might have fallen. Men do not see the reasons for their actions, but God, who makes use of them for His own purposes, sees all clearly."

This was the special and practical lesson that Angélique drew for the use of others from her review of the past, as she lay waiting for death. Not tyranny, not malice, had brought their griefs upon them, but the Hand of God. "Let us not be astonished and cast down, my sisters, but let us humble ourselves"— that was her constant exhortation. "God has done this to make us humble. Believe me, we are prone to misuse the greatest blessings. Wealth almost always brings pride with it, and we possessed such abundance of spiritual goods that, perhaps, we had a certain secret vanity. We made no difference betwixt rich and poor, we struck no bargains, we held aloof from the affairs of this world, and lived in great retirement. From this knowledge there sprang up self-complacency, the suggestion of comparison between this community and others not ordered in like manner, and in God's

sight that vanity would make the whole edifice of virtue as a house of cards. It was needed that God should humble us, that He should show us that all the help and enlightenment we had received had been wasted on us if it had not made us strong to suffer deprivation."

Whatever may have been the after deprivations of those who tended la Mère Angélique in her last days, they had ample compensation for all human ills in the memory of that experience. For it seems as though, when her terrible period of agony was passed, she felt herself already to have left the things of earth behind and to stand in the presence of God. To François de Sales or to the gentle Marie-Claire the transition from earth to heaven might be but as a natural awakening from sleep to consciousness. But Angélique could not elude the agony, for her life had been violent, and its end must be in keeping; yet it was a mercy of infinite price to those who loved her that before she passed beyond their ken she had tasted the joy of life eternal. The same hand recounts her doubts and terrors and her ultimate delivery and the details of the first condition are as vivid as of the second; the light upon her death-bed is not a dazzling and overwhelming radiance of triumph, but it is the mellow daylight of trustful and complete conviction. The murmured words which her attendant heard repeatedly, commemorated a life of sorrowful experience: "Domine miserere nostri, te enim expectavimus, esto brachium nostrum in mane, et salus nostra in tempore tribulationis;" * and she crowned the saying of the prophet with her own tribute: "Il nous est si bon, ma fille."

On August 4, 1661, la Mère Angélique Arnauld died very peacefully at the convent of Port-Royal de Paris.

We have followed her through the many changes and chances that brought her to the appointed limit of human life; we have seen how difficult and steep she found the path that she was summoned to tread in her Master's service, and it is impossible to deny that her own sufferings made her intolerant of the point of view that would reconcile the claims of God and of Mammon.

* Isa. xxxiii. 2.

In the days of her strength she mocked at such folly more than she deplored it. She had no proud confidence in her own salvation, but she had no doubt that those who rejected grace would perish. That was the fierce belief with which she confronted the wickedness that prevailed wherever her gaze rested. The mercy of God was sufficiently attested by the chance He offered of acceptance won by self-surrender. Christ had shown the way, and lived on earth, and taught and died, and the wilful blindness that refused to recognize Him, or to barter present indulgence for future blessedness deserved the damnation it would assuredly receive. Possibly in the labour and pain of her own hourly self-conquest, Angélique would not have desired that the pleasure-loving crowd should be awarded the recompense of which she dreamed. Her prayers for others were ardent and sincere, but always she desired to see them paying the price in the present for the blessing of the future. Their penitence and pain and self-surrender—all these were necessary, for the God to whom she prayed was a God who could be made angry by the iniquities of the people, the God whom the Hebrews feared rather than the God the Church was taught to love, and to Him it was necessary to make a sacrifice of suffering to purchase reconciliation.

By the goodness of God it was given to la Mère Angélique to reach a halting stage ere her journey ended. Had it been otherwise—despite the work she did and the great impress of pure and consecrated life she stamped upon her age—the record of her passage through the world would be incomplete, and a painful, rather than a stimulating, subject for reflection. But in her evening light she saw more clearly than at noon; she pushed away from her all that might intervene, and saw God only. She alone had true knowledge of the life that lay behind her, and, regarding it in the consciousness of solitude inseparable from the approach of death, she cried to Him for mercy as she had done so often in the progress of the years. But now the oft-repeated passionate appeal found its refrain in the child-like comment: "Il nous est si bon, ma fille!" It was thus that her mind was led from her own misgivings to the griefs of those about her, and so far out

beyond them, until her heart broke through the constraining force of the traditions of her youth, and was possessed by an infinite pity for all the sorrowing and sinning men and women who were all God's children, even as she was herself.

"Joining her hands together," says the simple record of the nuns who tended her, "she cried aloud in a tone that might well have reached to Heaven: 'Mon Dieu, faîtes nous misericorde à tous. Je dis à tous, mon Dieu, à tous!'" There was no limit to His Love, and from her own deep trust in it her love went out in a great yearning towards the multitude, who, blind to their own poverty, had never learnt to seek relief; and the prayer upon her dying lips was witness that to her the message of suffering had not been given in vain. "Faîtes nous misericorde à tous. Je dis à tous, mon Dieu, à tous!"

'In te Domine speravi non confundar in æternam."

CHRONOLOGY

FOUNDATION OF MONASTERY OF PORT-ROYAL

1216

Events in History of Port-Royal	Contemporary Events
1591. Birth of Jaqueline Arnauld.	1589. Deaths of Henri III. and Catherine de Medicis.
1600. Jaqueline Arnauld takes the veil.	1593. Henri IV. abjures Protestantism.
1608. Reform at Port-Royal begins.	1600. Marriage of Henri IV. and Marie de Medicis.
1618. Reform at Maubuisson.	1610. Assassination of Henri IV.
1622. Abbess Angélique returns to Port-Royal.	1614. Richelieu becomes powerful.
Death of S. François de Sales.	1615. Marriage of Louis XIII. and Anne of Austria.
1625. The Community removes to Paris.	
1630. Abbess Angélique renounces Office.	1622. Richelieu made a Cardinal.
1633. Institution of the Order of Adoration.	1637. Publication by Descartes of "Discours de la Méthode."
1638. New Order reunited to Port-Royal.	1638. Birth of Louis XIV.
Arrest of the Abbé de Saint-Cyran.	1639. Death of Marie de Medicis.
1641. Death of Mme. de Chantal.	1642. Death of Richelieu.
1643. Release and death of Abbé de Saint-Cyran.	1643. Death of Louis XIII. Mazarin becomes powerful.
1648 to 1652. War of the Fronde.	1648 to 1652. War of the Fronde.
1653. Persecution of Port-Royal begins.	1659. Beginning of Bossuet's celebrity.
1656. Publication of first Provincial Letter.	1660. Marriage of Louis XIV.
1661. Death of the Abbess Angélique.	1661. Death of Mazarin.

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